

E S S A Y S
O N
I M P O R T A N T S U B J E C T S,
I N
T W O V O L U M E S.

By DANIEL TURNER, M.A.

— Si quid novisti rectius istis
Candidus imperti, si non, his utere mecum. HOR.

V O L. I.

O X F O R D,
P R I N T E D F O R T H E A U T H O R;
And Sold by J. Buckland, Paternoster Row; J. Johnson,
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P R E F A C E.

THE Reader is desired to consider the following Pieces, not as *formal Discussions* of their respective Subjects, but as *mere Essays*, or general Hints, thrown out in a cursory Way, in order to awaken the Attention of the sincere Lovers of Truth, and lead them to a more liberal and diligent Inquiry after it; as, not yet, through enthusiastic Ignorance and Obstinacy on the one Hand, and the Pride of false Reasonings on the other, so fully discovered as many seem to think it is; nor, indeed, ever will be, till scholastic Systems of Theology, and sceptical Philosophy, are made to give Way to the Declarations of Scripture, understood in their own native Simplicity.

The Author of these Essays is no Slave
 to human Creeds; and, therefore, with
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only Common Sense and the Bible for his Guide, and constant Prayer to the Father of Lights for his gracious Assistance, has sincerely endeavoured to pursue his Inquiries with a Mind totally unbiaſſed, and with an earneſt Deſire of diſcovering, at leaſt ſome of, thoſe original Truths, which have been almoſt loſt amongſt the Rubbiſh of popular Prejudices.

We ſhould not, indeed, give up our pre-conceived Opinions lightly, nor without great Caution, carefully guarding againſt the deluſive Influence of Novelty, and a ſplendid Shew of Argument; but this may be done, without obſtinately perſiſting in thoſe Opinions, in an idle contemptuous Neglect of fair Investigation, or wilfully ſhutting our Eyes againſt the Light of convincing Evidence.

There has been a great deal ſaid by Divines both orthodox and heterodox, about *natural Religion*, as diſtinguiſhed from *revealed*, which appears to be entirely owing to the Force of Education, and the Want of an unprejudiced Examination

nation of the Subject. This Matter will be more particularly considered in the third Essay ; what is intended in the first, is to lay the Foundation of the whole, by shewing, that the *Idea of a God*, the one only Maker and sovereign LORD of the Universe, is not the natural Suggestion of the human Mind, left to itself, and to the Contemplation of the Works of God ; but the Effect of supernatural Revelation, or Instruction from God himself :—And in the second to shew, that the *Mosaic Account of the Creation* is Matter of such Revelation, and not a mere Jewish Fable, as some vain Pretenders to superior Wisdom would make us believe, but perfectly rational, and every Way consistent with all the leading Principles of the best Systems of Philosophy, such as are founded upon the most accurate Observations on the Phænomena of Nature, particularly with that of the immortal NEWTON.

The Author hopes that what he has said about the *Necessity of supernatural Revelation* and the *Insufficiency of human Reason*, in Religion, will not be understood as intended

intended to depreciate that distinguishing Excellency of our Nature, or to set aside the proper Use of it in a Business so interesting as Religion, and give ourselves up to the blind Impulses of Superstition, or the Absurdities of an enthusiastic Imagination. Reason is an inestimable Gift of God, intended to answer some of the most important Purposes of our Existence.—It is in the sober Exercise of this noble Faculty, that we are called upon to judge, even of divine Revelation itself, and distinguish it from Imposture: To this, therefore, as connected with the moral Sense, our LORD himself, and his Apostles often appeal, with the fullest Confidence of its Decisions in favour of their Doctrine. But still we should remember, our Reason at best, is but the Reason of finite Creatures, and, therefore, cannot comprehend Infinity;—of fallen Creatures, and therefore, liable to many and great Mistakes, and on these Accounts should be ever used with all possible Caution and Modesty, while we thankfully embrace
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the Light that divine Revelation affords us.

We are told in the Word of Truth, that, *the Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the LORD*,* but as a Candle can answer none of the Purposes it is intended for without Light, so this intellectual Power or Capacity in Man can be of no *effectual* Use in Religion, without that divine Illumination which the *Father of Lights* communicates through *his Son*, *the Light that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*; the grand Medium of all the Manifestations of the divine Favour to us.—The first kindling Spark of *this Light* is the Idea of God; which is increased in its Extent and Vigour, by a due Attention to the *Works of God*, but more especially by the serious Study of his HOLY WORD, where he gives us *the Light of the Knowledge of himself, and his Glory, in the Face of JESUS CHRIST*; a Light which will, at last, dispel all Darkness from the Minds of those who cordially

* Prov. xx. 27.

receive

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receive it, and will shine for ever in the World above with unclouded Lustre. But in Proportion as the false Pride which lurks in the Heart of fallen Man, gains the Ascendency, this heavenly Light is extinguished in him, and, as our LORD expresses it, *he walks in Dark-ness, and knoweth not whether he goeth*; or, which is much the same Thing, *walks in the Light of the Sparks of his own kindling*; * which naturally tend to lead him down to the Shades of outer Darknefs and Ruin.

* John xii. 35. Isa. L. 11.

Abingdon,
March 21, 1787.

D. T.

ON THE
O R I G I N
OF THE
I D E A O F G O D.

E S S A Y I.

WHEN we seriously contemplate the Heavens and the Earth, with their amazing Furniture, we are naturally led to ask — “ How came all these things into Existence?”—And to conclude, that either they always existed, or came into Existence by Chance, or were produced by some Cause. A few have embraced the first, others the second of these Conclusions, notwithstanding their extreme Absurdity; but the Generality of Mankind, with the highest Reason, have embraced the last: That is, they believe,
A that

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that there is ONE ONLY SELF-EXISTENT BEING, possessed of infinite Wisdom, Power, Goodness, &c.—The first Cause of all other Existencies ; and whom they call God.

But here the inquisitive Mind will be ready further to ask—“ How came I by the Idea of such a God ?” To which the only true Answer would be—“ I received it at first from those who had the
“ Care of my earliest Instruction ; tho’,
“ after I came to Years of Discernment,
“ and the proper Exercise of my Reason, I saw clearly, that such a Being
“ must necessarily exist ; because I could
“ not otherwise rationally account for
“ my own Existence, Powers, and Feelings, nor for Those of any other Beings
“ in the Universe ; nor for the various
“ Connections and Dependencies observable amongst them ; —The many
“ wise and important Ends they are adapted to answer, and the Regularity and
“ Certainty with which we perceive they
“ do actually answer them, continually.”

Thus then we believe the Existence of
a God,

a God, not from the Testimony or Suggestions of others, only, but also from the most rational Convictions of our own Minds. But unless the Idea of such a Being had been first suggested, I do not see how we could have reasoned ourselves into the Belief of it; and therefore esteem it a Mercy of the first Consequence, that we are not left to so difficult, I may say impossible a Task. For though our own Reason tells us that as something *does* exist, something must *always* have existed; yet this is all. Of what *Nature* this something is, or whether of several Natures, or of one Nature only, our Reason, left to itself, could not possibly inform us with any satisfactory Degree of Certainty; especially in its present debilitated State.

Such an inquisitive Mind would be also disposed to ask farther; "How do I know
 " that this Being called God, was the
 " Cause of all other Beings?"—The true Answer here also must be — "I was
 " taught to think so from my very Childhood; and as soon as I was capable of
 " examining

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“ examining the Subject, found the Sentiment abundantly confirmed from the
 “ Consideration of the acknowledged
 “ Perfections of God; from the Nature
 “ and Properties of other Beings, and
 “ from many other Particulars.”

That they who have already the Idea of an infinitely perfect and Almighty first Cause, should be able to apply the Observations they make on the Works of God, to the Purposes of confirming themselves in the Idea, of confounding the Atheists, and of convincing those who have any Doubt of the Truth, is readily allowed : But the Question is, whether this could be the Case without this Idea being first suggested to the Mind? * Or whether a

* *Epicurus* himself, tho’ reckoned amongst the Atheistical Philosophers, allows, that there were Gods, and that they were to be revered for their divine Excellencies. Πρωτον μεν, τον θεον ζων αφθαρτον κ’ μακαριον νομιζων. i. e. First reckoning that there is a God, a living, incorruptible, and blessed Being — Again, Θεοι μεν γαρ εισιν-οις δε αυτες οι πολλοι νομιζουσιν οκ εισιν. i. e. for there are Gods though not such as the Vulgar call so. But he represents them as taking
 Man,

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Man, who had never heard of such a God, and how the World came into Existence, could convince himself of those Things by the Power of his own Reason only; and consequently, whether we are not indebted to divine Revelation, and the Light that Way received, for our just Notions of a DEITY, The Maker and Lord of the the Universe?

I grant that a sensible Man might reason in this Manner,—“ I exist, therefore
“ something existeth, and something must

their Ease, without any Concern about making or governing the World. See *Diog. Laer. l. x. Vit. Epecuri*. Other Philosophers, indeed, believed a God, and his Providence, but they generally speak of Deity in the plural Number. So *Cicero*: “Sunt autem alii Philosophi, & hi quidem magni, atque nobiles, qui *Deorum* mente, atque ratione omnem Mundum administrari, et regi censeant.” *Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. i. Sect. 2. and 4.* See also *Stanley's Lives of the Philosophers*, p. 572.—all which shew, how miserably dark the Light of Nature is in this Case without the Light of Revelation, and even with it if not attended to; for we see that it was as natural for even these wiser Heathens to believe many Gods as to believe one, and indeed, more so,

“ have

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“ have eternally existed; because, if there
 “ was a Time, when no Being existed,
 “ nothing could have existed at any
 “ Time; *Nonentity* could not be the Cause
 “ of *Being*.—Again, what belongs essen-
 “ tially to any Being, must come under
 “ the same Predicament, must either
 “ have a Beginning or be eternal; and as
 “ I perceive Knowledge and vital Power
 “ belonging even to my own Existence,
 “ I conclude, that Knowledge and vital
 “ Power must be eternal, i. e. There
 “ must be some Being possessed of Know-
 “ ledge and vital Power from all Eter-
 “ nity. I perceive, indeed, Extension and
 “ Figure to be essential to mere Body, or
 “ Matter; but it does not follow that
 “ mere Body, or its Properties of Exten-
 “ sion and Figure, were eternal; because
 “ an eternal Being possessed of Know-
 “ ledge and vital Power, might produce
 “ Matter and those essential Properties of
 “ it; though it is impossible that mere
 “ Matter, or its Properties, should pro-
 “ duce Knowledge and vital Power; for,
 “ whatever Power produces any Thing
 “ else,

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“ else, must be vital in itself in some De-
 “ gree or other ; I mean if it be the *first*
 “ *Cause*, and not a mere Instrument ;
 “ and must possess that Vitality *naturally*,
 “ essentially eternally : mere Body does
 “ not possess such Vitality : it is capable
 “ of being endued with Life, but cannot
 “ originally and underivedly possess it :
 “ there must, therefore be *some Being*
 “ that does, this Being is GOD. GOD,
 “ then, must be immaterial, a pure, vital,
 “ self-existing, eternal Spirit.”—I say, a
 sensible Man might argue in this Manner ;
 but we should remember, that all such
 Reasoners are, more or less, possessed of
 the Light of special divine Revelation (at
 least the traditional) and reason so much
 the more clearly, as they enjoy more of
 that Light. Many Christian Authors
 have reasoned excellently on their De-
 monstrations of the Existence of a God,
 &c. but could they have done so, had
 they not been favoured with this super-
 natural Light ? No : For all the main and
 leading Principles in those Reasonings
 are derived from that Light ; and depend
 much

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much more upon it, than they themselves were aware of. A Man that sets out in this Business with this Advantage may succeed; but left entirely without it, he would find amazing Darkness in his Way. The Extent of even created Nature, though not absolutely infinite, is so to our Understandings.—We are soon lost in the vast Ocean of Being, and the various Powers and Properties of created Existencies, their Dependencies, Connections, Operations, &c. To traverse this immense Ocean in Search of any, even the first and most fundamental Principles of religious Truth, and which are the most obvious, with no better Guide than merely human Reason, in its present fallen and depraved State, must be a bold and daring Attempt indeed! Such, however, as no Man (so far as we know) ever yet made.

I readily grant, that our Reason must judge of the Ideas and Doctrines presented to it, whether true or false; must judge of any proposed Revelation itself, whether it be from God or not; and for
this

this Purpose God has given us sufficient Light and Power, if properly used. CHRIST and his Apostles always appealed to the common Sense and Reason, the moral Light and Feelings, of Mankind, for the Truth of what they taught; but it is one Thing to *judge* of any Notion or Doctrine proposed, and another to *discover* or find out such Notion or Doctrine. The Idea of a first intelligent and vital Cause and Governor of all Things, when suggested or taught, our Reason, if not grossly perverted, will naturally admit; and upon the Ground of this Principle, and its Concommitants, will judge of the Truth and Divinity of any religious System proposed to it:—But even the ablest Reasoner left to investigate the Nature of Things, especially the deep Things of God and Religion, by the dim Light of mere Nature, would soon find himself bewildered and lost in miserable Darkness. This is notoriously evident from the Reasonings of the Philosophers of old, especially those of the atheistical Tribe.

The

The Philosophers generally agreed that from nothing, nothing could be produced. They perceived something did exist, and therefore concluded, very justly, that something *always* existed: But the Question was, *what so existed?* As they perceived both Body and Mind existed, they concluded that one or both existed eternally. Here they were puzzled. The atheistical School held *Mind* was *Matter*, or, however, had no Concern in producing Matter, or in forming its various Appearances; but that *Matter* was eternal, and formed itself, or was self-existent. And yet these Philosophers *reasoned*, at least they thought they did.

And, indeed, much might be urged from various Topics against the Validity of the more plausible Reasoning above specified, and with *Appearance* of Truth; so that were it not that the divine Being himself had mercifully interposed, and given Mankind some special and extraordinary Assistance in this Case from supernatural Revelation. The Idea of *one*
existent

existent eternal Intelligence called God, the Creator and Lord of all Things, would be at best very wavering, dark, and uncertain; and be exposed to many more powerful Attacks from our sceptical Wits, than have ever yet been made upon it.* Besides it should be remembered, as before hinted, that the Reasonings in this Case, amongst us, are the Reasonings of those who have the Idea of such a Being already in their Minds. But how a Person, who never had any such Idea at all, would reason, cannot from hence,†

* This appears with the fullest Evidence from *Cicero de naturâ deorum*; and indeed, from the whole System of Polytheism, which was the System universally embraced by Mankind, where the Light of divine Revelation was forsaken for the Light of mere natural Reason.

† There is a Book entitled, *The Improvement of Human Reason, exhibited in the Life of HAI EBN YOK-DAN*; written in Arabic 500 Years ago, by JAAFAR EBN TOPHAIL; translated from the Original by SIMMON OAKLY, M. A. Vicar of Swavesey in Cambridgeshire. London printed 1708. This Translation, lent me by a learned Friend, I read; and observed a great deal of Ingenuity and Enthusiasm in this Mahomedan Philosopher:—But he takes too much for grant-

OR,

or, indeed, from any other Medium, within our Reach, be concluded. Whatever the Powers of the human Mind, in that improved State in which we now find them may be capable of doing towards demonstrating the Being and Perfections of God, from the due Consideration of his Works, yet still we must acknowledge that the first Idea of this GREAT BEING was never (so far as we know) in any one Instance, this Way derived, but impressed on our Minds by repeated Instruction long before we were capable of such Reasoning. They who argue so strenuously how easy it is for natural Reason, unassisted by divine Revelation, to discover a first Cause of that peculiar Nature we call God, forget that they had the Idea of this Cause long before they began to reason about it. The Questions therefore, are, how would

ed to prove his Point, which is to shew that Man, by the Light of his own Reason alone, may arrive at the true Knowledge of God, &c. Mr. *Oakley* has, therefore, added a very sensible Appendix in Confutation of this Opinion.

the

the Man reason upon this Subject, who never had any such previous Idea at all? And where is such a Reasoner to be found? Till these Questions are answered, all Arguing against the Truth I am pleading for in favour of the common Opinion, appears to be mere Sophism. Any one who is convinced that there is a God, the first Cause of all Beings, may possibly convince another of the same Truth, by proper Reasonings upon the Subject; but I cannot see how he could convince himself, without some farther Assistance than what *mere* Nature affords.

The few, indeed, who are fond of the Doctrine of *innate Ideas*, will insist upon it that the Idea of a God is of this Sort, and, consequently, that all Men are born with it as a Seed sown in the Soul, and brought to Maturity by the Exercise of Reason on the Works of God.— But this is a Doctrine so contrary to all Experience, and so fully confuted by *Lock*, *Hartley*, and many others, that I need not insist upon the Matter here.

But

But even supposing the Idea of God *innate*, or a Kind of seminal Principle in the Soul of Man, it does not necessarily follow that it is kindled up, as I may say, into actual Life, merely by a contemplative View of the Works of God, and the Exercise of our Reason upon them; it may be done by Instruction long before we have any Capacity for rationally noticing these Works; however, whether this Idea be innate or not, the Fact really is, We receive our first Acquaintance with it by the Medium of Instruction from others, and they from their Predecessors, and so back to the first Man, who was taught it by the GREAT FATHER of all.

The human Mind is, indeed, so constituted, and endued with such Capacities and Powers, as to be disposed to receive Notions or Ideas of Things almost instantaneously, or upon the first Representation of them, without any perceptible Deliberation, or Reasoning about them. Hence, therefore, the Idea of one living and true God, or first Cause, when suggested, is admitted at once, as carrying

carrying its own Evidence with it, or as something connatural to our *moral Sense*, which is disposed to receive it, as the warm Wax to receive the Impression of the Seal : But, for all this, I cannot conceive how any Thing like a *just* Idea of *such* a Being can be excited in it, or impressed upon it, by merely viewing his Works, without any Kind of Instruction or Hint first given of his Existence ; because, he himself still lies concealed behind them, and every Way invisible ; but when once the Idea is suggested, the unprejudiced Mind readily, and almost involuntarily admits it ; and once admitted, a proper View of the Works of God, and the Exercise of our reasoning Powers upon them will, under the divine Influence and Blessing, greatly strengthen it, and render it still more and more consistent, clear, rational, lively, in Proportion to the Attention to the almost infinitely abundant Evidence that pours in upon us on every Hand continually.—But, that any Man, left entirely to the Light of Nature, should attain

tain to any clear and consistent Idea of the great CREATOR AND LORD of the Universe, or, indeed, any Idea at all, does not appear to me even possible. No Instance, however, can be given of any such Atchievement, or that can support the Notion of the Possibility of it.—So far from it, that, on the contrary, we find many of the greatest Pretenders to Reason, and who are really possessed of shining natural Abilities, reasoning themselves out of this Idea, at least out of all *Belief* of the Existence of any such Being; and this, notwithstanding their having been once early and deeply impressed with it, and the Impression supported by the strongest Prejudices of Education, the Evidence arising from the Works of Creation, and the additional Light of external Revelation, for Years together. And, indeed, amongst those who do believe the Existence of a DEITY, where there is one that entertains this Belief from a rational View of the many just Grounds for it in Nature, there are Thousands who do it merely by Rote, and without any just Reasoning at all.

It

It may also be farther observed, that if the Idea of such a Being as we call God, were *innate*, or what sprung up naturally in the Mind as a constitutional Principle, it would be impossible ever to lose it, while the Powers of Intellect remained: And yet we have abundant Reason to believe, that there are Numbers of People, in the remote Parts of the Earth, who have lost it entirely*. It cannot, therefore, be a *natural* Notion; for, though what is derived from *Instruction* may be lost, yet what is properly *natural* cannot be so, while the Nature to which it belongs continues.—The Psalmist ob-

- * Travellers and Historians of the best Credit assure us, that there are whole Nations in some Parts of the World, that have not the least Trace of any Idea of a God, or Object of Worship; or even so much as any Name for such a Being, and yet possess the Powers of natural Reason to a very high Degree. How could this be the Case, if the Idea was *innate*, or attainable by viewing and reasoning upon the Works of God? See MARSDEN'S *History of Sumatra*, p. 250. COOK'S *Voyages*. DR. ROBERTSON'S *History of America*, Vol. ii. p. 192. 195. 486.

serves, that the *Fool says in his Heart there is no God*: But could even a *Fool* say this in *his Heart*, if the Idea of the Existence of a God had been the natural Dictate of it, and fixed in it as a Part of his Constitution? No: no more than he could have said there was no Sun, or that himself did not exist, think, &c.

I readily allow that the Idea of a God is *connatural* to Man; that is, is perfectly consonant to his natural Powers, his Reason and moral Feelings. It is this Circumstance in his Constitution that renders him capable of Religion and the moral Government of God; but the Question still is, does this Idea arise from the mere Light of Nature, and Reasoning upon the Works of God, or from Instruction? From what has been already said, we may justly conclude from the latter; and because we see, that a Sense of Religion and Morals, which is inseparable from that Idea, takes Place and operates in the human Mind, long before it is capable of reasoning itself into it.

Besides,

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Besides, if Men could, by the mere Contemplation of Nature, and the Exercise of their Reason upon it, discover that there was a God, and attain to any *just* Idea of his Perfections, is it not to the last Degree astonishing, that, amongst so many acute Reasoners as have appeared in the more civilized and learned Parts of the Heathen World, a clear and just Notion of the Nature and Perfections of DEITY should be so generally lost, and not *one* of them found able to recover it? They pretended to own a DEITY; but how diverse their Opinions about *Him*; or rather *them*, for they all held a Plurality of *Gods*? In *Egypt* they worshiped one Sort, in *Persia* another, in *Greece* another, &c. Could this have been the Case were their Notions of DEITY just, and dictated by Nature? And does not the Apostle draw his Argument for the absolute Necessity of a Divine Revelation from this very Circumstance where he says, * “ For after

* 1 Cor. i. 21.

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“ that in [*the very Midst of Evidences of*]
 “ the Wisdom of GOD, the World by
 “ Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD
 “ by [*what the World calls*] the Foolish-
 “ nefs of Preaching to save them that
 “ believe.” The World in general had
 the Works of GOD always before them,
 possessed the Powers of Reason, and en-
 joyed some Assistance from the Remains
 of the Light of the original Revelation;
 but, with all these Means of Wisdom,
 they knew not GOD, had no consistent
 Notions of his Nature and Perfections,
 knew not who or what He was.—
 GOD, therefore, out of his infinite Bene-
 volence and Compassion, favoured them
 with a new and far more clear and
 striking Discovery of himself, in JESUS
 CHRIST his Son, as the more effectual
 Way of recovering them to just Appre-
 hensions of His adorable Nature and
 Character, and of engaging their more
 serious Attention to their Relation to
 Him, and Dependence upon Him, as
 the Author of their Being, the Judge of
 their Conduct, and the Source of their
 Happiness.

Even

Even at *Athens*, a City so universally celebrated, as the very Seat of Wisdom, there was an Altar inscribed TO THE UNKNOWN GOD *. It was not for Want of Philosophers, and subtle Reasoners, nor of the Display of the Wisdom and Power of God in his Works; nor even of some Remains of the original Revelation, that the *only Living and true God*, was thus confessedly unknown to them:—Nor was the Light of Nature, which they still enjoyed, sufficient to enable them to recover the Idea of this God which had been so long and so miserably lost amongst them;—They stood in Need of farther Instruction:—HIM, therefore, says the Apostle, *I declare unto you*. How improbable then is it that Mankind should at-

* ACT. xvii. 23. Heathen Writers mention this Inscription,—*Lucian, Philostratus and Pausanias*. Dr. Doddridge in his *Family Expositor* supports this Observation with good Authorities, and says, That *Athens*, though the most famous City in the World for Learning, was the most superstitious, and ignorant of any Thing like a rational Religion.

tain the Idea of GOD at first by the mere Light of Nature ?

It cannot, indeed, be denied, that the wiser Heathens had *a general* Notion of some SUPREME BEING, and that He was the Maker and Lord of all ; but their Notions were very faint, obscure, and full of Confusion, even at the best. * Their *Jupiter*, though stiled the *Father of Gods and Men*, was, by their own Account of him, a very different Kind of Being from the true GOD ; and with him they admitted a Number of other Deities, such as they were, to whom they paid divine Honours.—All which shew

* Quid enim potest esse tam apertam, tamque perspicuum, cum Cælum suspeximus cœlestiaque contemplati sumus, quam esse aliquod Numen, præstantissimæ Mentis, quo hæc regantur ? Quod ni ita esse, qui potuisset assensu omnium dicere *Ennius* ?

*Auspice hoc sublime candens, quem invocant omnes Jovem
—Patrem divumque Hominumque.*

Et presentem ac præpotentem Deum. Quod qui dubitet, haud sanè intelligo ; cur non idem sol sit, an nullus sit, dubitare possit.

Cicer. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. sec. 2d.

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the amazing Weakness of mere natural Light, in this important Business. But admitting the most that can be said in favour of these Men of Nature, I still ask, how came they by even their obscure Notions of a supreme God? Was it born with them, so as to grow up in the Mind naturally?—Was it acquired by the Exercise of their rational Powers on the Works of God? or, rather, did they not receive it by Instruction? We have certainly most Reason to conclude the latter, and that what right Knowledge they had of God, was, at least as to its first Principles, through this Medium.

Cicero, in the Beginning of his Book of *the Nature of the Gods*, tells us that he is undertaking to discuss “a very difficult and obscure Question, about which the most Learned entertained very different Opinions.—The greatest Number of them say there are Gods—*Protagoras* is doubtful.—*Diagoras Melius* and *Theodorus Cyrenaicus* think there are none at all. And amongst those
“ who

“ who say that there are Gods, their
 “ Sentiments are so various and dissen-
 “ tient, that it would be no easy Matter
 “ to give an Account of them.” * And
 whoever reads that Treatise, will be fully
 convinced that even the wisest and most
 learned of Mankind at that Time, en-
 tertained very crude and uncertain No-
 tions of GODHEAD. It is, indeed, re-
 markable and of great Importance to ob-
 serve, that Men of the greatest natural
 Abilities, and Improvements in Science
 amongst the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were
 most deplorably Ignorant of the Nature
 and Perfections of the DEITY, and of
 the Worship due to Him, even though
 they, in some Degree, enjoyed, or might

* Per difficilis—et perobscura questio est de Natu-
 ra Deorum—de qua tam variae sunt Doctissimorum
 omnium, tamque discrepantes sententiae — plerique
 Deos esse dixerunt; dubitare se *Protagoras*: nullos
 esse omnino *Diagoras Melius*, & *Theodorus Cyrenai-
 cus* putaverunt. Qui vero Deos esse dixerunt, tanta
 sunt in varietate, ac Dissensione, ut eorum molestum
 sit dinumerare Sententias. De Nat. Deor. lib. i. ch. i.
 sect. 2d.

have

have enjoyed, the superior Light of divine Revelation as it appeared in the Fragments of ancient Tradition, and the Books of the Old Testament, translated into Greek : But neglecting this gracious and heavenly Light, to follow the Dictates of their own depraved Reason, they were justly given up to the Darkness they had chosen.—But while these *wise Men* thus awfully betrayed their own *Foolishness*, the *Hebrews*, a People esteemed, (perhaps justly,) the most illiterate and stupid amongst Mankind in that Day, entertained exceedingly just and sublime Sentiments upon this interesting Subject ; *knew God, and glorified Him as God* ; and wrote and spoke of Him in a Style the most dignified and worthy of His adorable Perfections :—All which seem to suggest to us, that religious Knowledge is derived from a Source very different from that of natural Science, or, at least, through very different Mediums. The Science of Nature, though vast and deep, lies more open to the human Mind, and comes more within
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the Reach of its Powers, than that of Religion, the leading Subject of which is the God of Nature. Men may arrive at some distinguishing Degree of Knowledge in the former by the mere Light of Reason, and the Force of natural Genius, but the most masterly Genius, supported by the strongest Powers of Reason is lost in the Immensity of DEITY and the Splendours of His divine Perfections, and knows not where to fix even a first Conception with Certainty, without the Aid of divine Revelation.

Suppose the first Man, as soon as he became a *living Soul*, to have been favoured with the free and full Exercise of his intellectual Powers; in this Case, he would doubtless have been struck with the utmost Astonishment upon the first View of himself, and the Works of God about him; but, that he could, from any Principle of Nature within his Reach, have investigated or found out the eternal supreme GODHEAD; or have concluded, with Certainty, however he might guess at it, that there was ONE

ONLY

ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD, possessed of infinite Wisdom, Power, &c. and that He was the Creator, or first Cause of all the various Beings which he saw, must, if well considered, appear very improbable, to say the best. He would find himself, and other Beings, possessed of surprising Powers; but how they came by their Existence, and those Powers which accompanied it, whether they had all *one* and the same Maker or first Cause, or *several*, what Principle was there in Nature to enable him decisively to determine?

Some of the *Theists*, amongst the ancient Philosophers, held, that there were *two* first Causes eternally existing, the one *active*, the other *passive*.—Some held that the supreme God made other *Gods*, and that they made the World. *Ovid* confesses he knew not which of them it was that reduced the Chaos to Order. *

" Sic ubi dispositam, quisquis fuit ille deorum,

" Congeriem fecuit, sectamque in Membra redegit."

Epicurus,† and others, asserted the E-

* Met. lib. 1.

† Diog. Vit. Epecuri.

ternity of Matter, and that all particular Existencies were produced by a fortuitous Concourse of Atoms. And even Christian Divines speak of *three Persons* as concerned in the Production of the Universe, whom they call *Father, Son, and Spirit*. Some of them, indeed, say, that these three are but one and the same GODHEAD; others, that the *Son* and *Spirit* are inferior to the Father, and not truly and properly possessed of supreme DEITY, but mere Instruments only in this great Work. Now, as this is the *Fact*, how improbable is it, that the first Parent of Mankind, by the *Light of Nature* ONLY should be able to determine the Point with Certainty?

But supposing that with this Light ONLY, he should, somehow, have discovered that there must be *some* first Cause, yet of what *Nature* that Cause was, or of what Perfections possessed, he could scarcely have conceived with any Degree of Clearness, and Certainty, while that Cause lay concealed among so great a Number of astonishing Beings around
Him,

Him, and no particular Clue afforded him to direct his Inquiries.

Milton, led by the Force of simple Truth, against the Current of received Opinions, acknowledges all I have been saying; and very justly, as well as beautifully, represents our first Parent as entirely ignorant of even his own Original, as well as of that of the Beings he noticed, and therefore as inquiring of the celestial Messenger:—

“ — With Desire to know
 “ (Which nearer might concern him) how the World
 “ Of Heaven and Earth conspicuous, first began,
 “ Whence and whereof created.”——

—— And relate
 “ How first began this Heaven which we behold
 “ Distant so high, with moving Fires adorn’d,
 “ Innumerable ——

“ But who I was, or where, or for what Cause,
 “ Knew not.”——

Here the Poet introduces the *divine Being* himself, declaring to *Adam* that HE was the first Cause and Maker of all—

——“ Whom

—— “ Whom thou fought’st I am,
 “ Said mildly, Author of all these Things thou see’st,
 “ Above, or round about thee, or beneath.” *——

Now, if innocent Man, with all the Advantages of a more perfect Nature, stood in Need of divine Instruction in order to know God to be the sole Creator and first Cause of all Beings, much more fallen Man, who labours under the Disadvantage of a clouded Intellect, and depraved Passions. Accordingly the Apostle tells us, That it is *through Faith we understand the Worlds were formed by the Word of God*, so that the Things which are *seen, were not made by the Things that do appear.* † And if by *Faith* we understand this, then certainly by supernatural Revelation, or Instruction from God, for that is properly the Object or Matter of Truth.—The Apostle’s Meaning is plainly this, (viz.)

—“ That it is not by the Researches of
 “ mere natural Reason, but by believing
 “ the Record of God, or what he has

* Pard. Loft. b. vii. v. 86. b. viii. v. 136.

† Heb. xi. 3.

“ revealed

“ revealed to us in his holy Word, that
 “ we arrive at the Knowledge of the
 “ Origin of the Universe ; and, that one
 “ Kind of visible Things did not create,
 “ or give Existence to the rest ; or any
 “ of them arise out of eternally pre-ex-
 “ isting Matter, of their own accord,
 “ or by any effective Power in Matter,
 “ as the natural Reason of Man, left to
 “ itself, might suppose from what we
 “ almost daily perceive ; but that ONE
 “ LIVING ALMIGHTY GOD, was the
 “ Cause, Author, and Disposer of the
 “ whole.” Thus the Apostle plainly
 shews that the Knowledge of the Origin
 of the World is learnt, not by the Light
 of Nature but by divine Revelation.

The most antient Philosophers held,
 that the World had a Beginning, and was
 not eternal ; and that it was the Work of
 the great SUPREME BEING called GOD ; *

* THALES, who is said to be the first that took
 upon him the Title of *Philosopher*, held, that the
 material Origin of Things was Water or Moisture ;
 but says — *πρῶτον αἶμα, θεός· ἀγνῆτος*
γὰρ, καλλίτερον κόσμος. Ποιήματα θεῶν. i. e.
 yet

yet they did not pretend to have discovered these Truths by their own Reasonings, however by that Means they might be confirmed in the Belief of them; but acknowledged that they received them by Tradition, or Instruction handed down to them from the first Fathers of Mankind, as Matter of *supernatural Revelation*, or Lessons first taught by the DEITY himself. * Though as the Writings of *Moses* existed in the Times of those Philosophers which are known to us; and as the Substance of those Writings, was then considerably spread abroad in the World, they might derive much Light

GOD is the most ancient of Beings; for he is unbegotten; the World is most beautiful, because it is the Workmanship of GOD. Diog. Laert. Vit. *Thales*. See also Cicer. de Nat. Deorum. Lib. 1. ch. 10. and ch. 25.

* " There is good Reason to believe, that the first Principles of Philosophy amongst the Greeks, were Notions conveyed to them by Tradition, rather than Discoveries of their own, though they might enlarge upon them." *Stillingsfleet's Orig. Sac.* b. iii. p. 285.

from

from the Perusal of them, or Reports from them.

When some of those Sages, such as *Democritas*, *Lucippus*, and others, began to controvert this Point, and examine it by the mere Light of Reason, the Consequence was, their embracing and endeavouring to establish a System entirely the reverse; asserting the Eternity of Matter by abusing the Maxim—*That out of nothing nothing could be produced*; the just and necessary Inference from which is—that there must be a *first Cause*, of some Nature or other; but whether of *Mind* or *Matter* was the Question.—They asserted *Matter*, contrary to all just Reasoning. And yet these Gentlemen were as great Masters of Reason, and as expert in the Management of it, as any of the minute Philosophers of our Day. But giving up that Measure of the Light of Divine Revelation which they enjoyed, and relying entirely upon the All-sufficiency of their own Understandings, they lost Sight of the Truth, and in the Maze of Darknefs thus brought

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upon

upon themselves, they ran into the greatest Absurdities of Atheism. And it is very observable, that the more the Light of antient Revelation, though but traditionary, was neglected, and that of mere Nature relied on, the more those Absurdities prevailed; which shews the the vast Importance and even absolute Necessity of a serious and constant Regard to the more effectual Assistance which the Father of Lights has given us in his most holy Word, as the Means of preserving in our Mind the very first Principles of true Religion, and even of true Philosophy;—for we shall always find, upon due Reflection, that Reason alone is not only insufficient to enable us to discover these first Principles, with Clearness and Certainty, but even to preserve the Belief of them in our Hearts, though impressed there by the strong Prejudices of Education, and by a Variety of other natural Influences. What vast Numbers, especially amongst the Poor, do we see, even in this enlightened Country, where the Bible is, or
may

may be read, and the Doctrines of it preached so universally, who have scarcely any Idea of the DEITY at all, much less any consistent one of his adorable Perfections, and his Relation to them! which demonstrates that such an Idea is so far from being the Effect of the mere Light of Nature alone, that it is with Difficulty obtained, and with Difficulty preserved among Mankind, even under the great Advantages that glorious Revelation which we enjoy affords us.

I acknowledge, that the Apostle in the beginning of his Epistle to the *Romans** seems, at the first View of the Text, to militate strongly against the Doctrine I am inculcating; and to assert, that the Being of a God and his Perfections as the original *Cause* of all Beings, might be learnt, by mere Reason from the Works of God; but if the Matter be attentively considered, it will, I think, appear in quite another Light, and greatly favour

* Rom. i. 16, &c. See Essay iii. Let. v. where this Text is again considered.

my Sentiment. What the Apostle says, amounts plainly to this—The Gentiles held *the Truth in Unrighteousness*—That these Truths respected the Righteousness of God, and his Wrath, which were *revealed* from Heaven in the Gospel, and by that Means *shewn* to them; and then adds, in order to prove them utterly inexcusable in their Idolatry and Wickedness:—

For the invisible Things of Him, from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead. That is, “the visible Works of that invisible “ Being, who manifested his Righteousness “ and Wrath, by the supernatural Revelation which he gave to Mankind, continually declare HIM to be the only “ living and true God, the Maker, or “ first Cause of them all; and who, “ therefore, justly claims an exclusive “ Right to the religious Homage and “ Obedience of all his intelligent Creatures.”—The Apostle does not say that the Works of God do themselves enable

enable Mankind to discover *his eternal Power and Godhead*, by the Efforts of their own Reason *alone*; no, but that the Truth of his Existence, together with his moral Character, or his *Righteousness and Wrath*, being taught before, by special Revelation, or *Gospel*, conveyed down to them by oral Tradition or written Records, they were every Day and Night reminded, of what they had (or might have) so learnt, by the glorious Display of the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, which the Works of Creation afforded them, and which were standing Witnesses of the Reality of his Existence, the Excellency of his Perfections, and the Majesty of his Government; and also perpetual Monitors of their Obligations to him; so that they were left entirely without Excuse in giving that Glory to his Creatures which was due to HIM ALONE, *the God over all, blessed for evermore.*

It is observable also, that *Moses* in his Account of the Creation, does not mention the Works of God, with a View of

demonstrating his Existence; but taking that for granted as a *Precognitum*, or a Truth already known and believed, he begins at once with declaring that — *In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*, and then proceeds to inform us how, and in what Manner this visible System was brought into Existence, and reduced to Order: But gives us not the least Hint that these Things were done on Purpose to afford us the Means of obtaining the *first Idea* of the Being and Perfections of their Creator. He writes with the Design of shewing us, that as there is *one* self-existent Almighty Being ONLY;—That HE is the great Author of Nature, the Parent of the Universe; and, that having poured out the Riches of his Goodness through the whole in such Abundance, he justly claims an exclusive Right to the religious Adoration and Praise, Love and Obedience, of all Men. *Moses* does not even make a Shew of entering into the Dispute, whether there was a God? for that was a Truth so well known,

known, and so generally admitted, without any Doubt in his Day, that argumentative Proof of it was entirely unnecessary. The only Points wanting to be ascertained were, whether the Being called God, was the Creator or first Cause of the whole World, and how he conducted the stupendous Work, and particularly that Part of it which is visible to Mankind?—In short—The Questions before him were—“ Had the World a Beginning? Who was the Maker or Cause of it? And how was it made?” To these Questions the Account *Moses* gives is a full and clear Answer in a few Words—And that JEHOVAH, the God owned and worshiped by the Seed of *Abraham* in particular, as *their* God, was THE VERY BEING that gave Existence to *all* others, visible and invisible; and that HE was the God first known to Mankind, as the Object of their supreme Regards, the ONLY LIVING and true God. And, indeed, it is pretty evident, that *Moses* himself, did not learn the Existence of this God, from the Works of
Creation

Creation, but even the Work of Creation itself from God, by *supernatural Revelation*, and wrote what was divinely taught.

It is true *Moses* was educated in all the Learning of the *Egyptians*, which was then, and long afterwards, highly celebrated, and it is very probable (as many learned Men have observed) that the first Philosophers amongst the *Greeks*, received the chief Branches of their Knowledge from the *Egyptians*, and particularly what they knew of the Origin of the World; the *Literati* of that Country being probably better acquainted with the antient Tradition upon this Subject; but as these Philosophers appeared in the World after *Moses*, it is most likely that the little they knew of this Matter was principally owing to his Writings, which were then known to the learned; however, what they say upon it, is so intermixed with the *Dogmas* of their own Philosophy, and so obscured by them, that the Truth is scarcely discernable.—And as to the *Egyptian Theology*, it was in after

ter Ages, if not in the Time of *Moses*, most amazingly superstitious, and to the last Degree contemptible. * *Moses*, therefore, could have little Assistance from the Schools of *Egypt* in this Affair; and, indeed, none at all, sufficient for his Purpose; we may then very fairly conclude, that the Account he has given us of the Production of the Universe, could not possibly be derived from any other Source than that of supernatural Instruction, either that handed down to him from the first Father of Mankind, by oral Tradition; or, which is more probable, and I doubt not the real Fact, that imparted

* *Juvenal*, in his fifteenth Satyr, has smartly ridiculed this superstitious Folly :

Quis nescit, Volusi Bithynice, qualia demens
 Ægyptus portenta celat ? Crocodilon adorat
 Pars hæc : illa pavet saturam serpentibus Ibin.
 Effigies sacri nitet aurea cercopitheci ;

And a little after,

O sanctas Gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis
 Numina !

to him by divine Inspiration; and I rather think this to be the Case, because I cannot possibly conceive how he could have pointed out the Process of this great Work so circumstantially, and so perfectly consistent with the most accurate Observations on the Phenomena of Nature, had not his Pen been under the Direction of the great Operator himself. The Knowledge this great Man had by Tradition, must have been too general, and after so long a Time, must also have been mixed with the Errors of human Invention.

I grant that Moses might have some general Notions of this Subject from Tradition; supposing, as some do, * that

* All that can be said with Certainty is, that *Methuselah* was Cotemporary both with *Adam* and *Noah* several Years, and must be well acquainted with all traditional Matters. *Noah* lived at the least to near the Birth of *Abraham*, who was great Grandfather to *Levi*, who was the great Grandfather of *Moses* by the Father's Side, and the Grandfather by the Mother's. See *Usser's* Chronology. Dr. *Patrick's* Comment on the fifth Chap. Gen.

Adam

Adam lived cotemporary with *Lamech*, the Father of *Noah*, above forty Years. *Noah*, according to some Chronologers, lived above fifty Years after the Birth of *Abraham*, or, however, died but two Years before, according to others. *Shem*, one of the Sons of *Noah*, they tell us, lived till the Days of *Jacob*, or fifty Years in the Life of *Isaac*; *Levi*, therefore, the Son of *Jacob*, and the great Grandfather of *Moses*, and who lived forty Years after the Birth of his grandson *Moses*'s Father, might have some Knowledge of the most material Matters of ancient Tradition; and amongst the rest of the Origin of the World, as revealed by God to our first Parents. *Moses* therefore living so near this Fountain of Knowledge, might be supposed to be in some Degree acquainted with this Particular, but surely not with all that was necessary to enable him to give so clear and minute an Account of it, as he has done. For, supposing the above Chronological Reckoning to be just, which I much doubt, yet it should be remembered on the other Hand,

Hand, that *Moses* was taken from his Parents in his Infancy, and educated in the Egyptian Court, where the greatest Errors triumphed over Truth, and the Darknefs of mere human Philosophy miserably obscured the Light of divine Revelation, which was then probably preserved, only by Tradition. He was forty Years of Age before it appears that he conversed with his Brethren, and then but for a very short Time:—*They* had been two hundred Years in Slavery, and of course were sunk into the very Dregs of Ignorance and Stupidity; so that Tradition must have suffered greatly amongst them, and come to *Moses* under many Disadvantages; and yet his Account is not only extremely exact and circumstantial, though so compendious, but designed to serve the Church of God to the End of Time, and therefore must be owing to a new supernatural Revelation from God himself, and not to a dark uncertain mutilated Tradition.—But this naturally leads me to the Account that *Moses* gives of the World, which will be
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the Subject of the next *Essay*; I would, therefore, conclude this with observing,—

That, from Matters of Facts as well as from Reason and the Nature of Things, it clearly appears, that our *first Idea* of one self-existing and all-perfect first Cause and sovereign Lord of all is, not a *Creature* of our Imagination, or even Reasonings, but a divine Gift, the Effect of the paternal Benevolence of the DEITY, and the supernatural Discovery he has made of himself and his Will to us; or, in two Words, not what we *acquire*, but what we *receive* by Instruction; a Circumstance that points out to us in the strongest Light, the absolute Necessity, and infinite Excellency of that Revelation we are favoured with in the Bible; and that all the leading Principles in the Religion of fallen Man, which is properly called, *the Gospel*, are owing to that Revelation; so that the little Religion which is to be found, in the Heathen World, so far as is true, is nothing else but the broken Remains of this divine Light, handed down to them from
the

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the first Fathers of Mankind, though miserably darkened and debased by their own idolatrous and superstitious Inventions.

The Children of *Adam*, from his Days to the present, come into the World in a Condition that evidently requires *Instruction* in the first Principles, at least, of every Thing that concerns them, long before they are capable of exercising their rational Powers. It is, indeed, *absolutely necessary* in order to furnish the Mind with Materials for the proper Exercise, of those Powers, and from which they must begin their Operations, for there can be no Reasoning without some *Data*, some Principles to set out upon: And we may very justly conclude from the infinite Benevolence of our heavenly Father, and from the Nature of his moral Government, that he would not leave us Destitute of the earliest Instruction, upon a Subject of such infinite Importance to his own Glory, as well as our Comfort, as that of the Reality of his Existence, Perfections, and Relation to us.

But

But however we come by this Idea of a DEITY, we are all of us conscious of it more or less, and it is our unspeakable Felicity that we are—It is an Idea of the last Importance to us as rational and immortal Beings—it gives a particular Dignity to our Thoughts, purifies and guards our Hearts, restrains the Impetuosity of our Passions, inspires the brightest Hopes, and fills the Soul *with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*; it is, indeed, the first fundamental Principle of all true Religion, Virtue, and Happiness. It should therefore, be our constant and solicitous Concern, so to realize this Idea, and preserve it in all its vital Power in our Minds, that it may habitually govern our Temper and Conduct.

To this End, we should, as the Psalmist expresses it, *set the Lord always before us*, never lose Sight of him a Moment, through any wilful Neglect or Inattention;—constantly Notice the Discoveries he makes of himself in the Works of Creation and Providence: Meditate frequently upon them, and endeavour to bring home
to

to our Bosoms the striking Evidence they afford us of his Perfections and Government.—But particularly, and above all, we should devoutly study the BIBLE, in which is contained the Oracles of divine Truth and Wisdom, the *Words of eternal Life*, where we see all the Perfections of DEITY still more gloriously displayed, and all operating for the Happiness of his fallen Creature Man. By a serious and constant Use of these Means; this great Idea will be so deeply impressed, and so entirely preserved, as never to be effaced; the Pleasures connected with it rendered solid, permanent, satisfying; and prove a sure Defence against the blasphemous Absurdities and horrid Gloom of Atheism.

But as this Idea of God comprehends in it the first Principles of his moral Government, in which our Happiness for Time and Eternity are so nearly concerned, it is of infinite Importance that our Sentiments about him be *just* and *rational*, every Way worthy of his all-perfect Nature, and consonant to his revealed Will.

Will.—Some are so unhappy in their Cast of Mind, as to conceive of him, as an arbitrary Despote, possessed of irresistible Power, and universal Dominion; and who, therefore, makes his *mere* Will his Law, without any Regard to Goodness and Mercy, or even Justice; saying one Thing, and meaning another quite the reverse; making his rational Creatures Sinners, by his own arbitrary Constitution of Things, and then punishing them with everlasting Misery for being such, and even triumphing over them as thus contributing to his Glory!!—This is an Idea so every Way extremely shocking, so derogatory to the divine Nature and Perfections, so gloomy and discouraging to the humble Penitent, so calculated to harden Men in Sin, and so subversive of the whole System of the moral Government of the DEITY, that even *Atheism* itself is scarcely more to be abhorred; and yet there are Men, pretending to Religion, who cherish such an Idea of the benevolent Parent of Mankind; and storm and rave continually in Defence

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of Doctrines that necessarily imply it. But this Idea cannot be from God, but from the *Father of Lies*, the Adversary of God and Man, *the Spirit that Works in the Children of Disobedience*.

God does, indeed, *work all Things according to the Counsel of his own Will*, but that Will is counselled in all its Plans, and directed in all its Operations, by his moral Perfections of *Wisdom, Justice, Goodness*, and even his *tender Mercies*; and is, therefore, always perfectly consistent with them.

On the other Hand, some flatter themselves with the Notion that the DEITY is all Benevolence and Mercy, and pays no Regard to his own Honour, or Justice, the Purity of his Nature, or the Dignity of his Government.—That he looks upon even the grossest Vices as mere Trifles, beneath his Notice, and what his Goodness will lead him to excuse; and consequently that they have nothing to fear from his Resentment;—That if Repentance be necessary, *a Lord have Mercy upon us*, in the last Moment
of

of Life, will be sufficient; or, let the worst come, that they shall then drop into a State of total and everlasting Insensibility, freed from all Misery; a Consolation they can have Recourse to at any Time, when their Misery becomes insupportable. Awful Delusion! Our God is *both a just God, and a Saviour.*

Happy the Man who avoids these dangerous Extremes, whose Heart is ever filled with a *just Idea* of this great BEING, and who ardently *loves* while he reverently *adores* him! God does, indeed, DWELL IN HIM; always present to direct and satisfy his most impatient Enquiries; to support and comfort him in the Hour of Adversity; conduct him safely through the dark Valley and Shadow of Death, and will be his all-sufficient and most delightful Portion for ever!

52 ON THE MOSAIC ACCOUNT

E S S A Y II.

ON THE
MOSAIC ACCOUNT
OF THE
CREATION,

As it is respects the
SOLAR SYSTEM IN PARTICULAR.

THE attentive Reader of the Account which *Moses* gives of the CREATION, will find the Truths confirmed, which have been inculcated in the former Essay. He will perceive that *Moses* does not write as a *Philosopher*, *ex-professo*, but as a *Prophet* sent from God, to instruct Mankind in Matters of far greater Importance, (viz.) the Nature, Perfections, and Worship of the great Sovereign

Sovereign of the World. * But though the Design of *Moses* is, not to teach us *Philosophy* but *Religion*, yet, what he says is perfectly agreeable to the Constitution of the true, and real Principles of the visible World, and their various Operations, so far as they can be noticed by us, whatever the sceptical Dabblers in Science may say to the contrary. This, indeed, as writing under a divine Influence, we should expect from him. The Book of Supernatural Revelation must perfectly agree with that of Nature, as having both the same Author: And upon a fair and candid Examination, we shall find it does, in the Case before us, in a most striking Manner, and such as shews that *Moses* must have had his Account some Way or other from God the great Parent of Nature.

* Dr. *Patrick* observes, (Com. Gen.) that the ancient Idolatry consisted in the Worship of the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*; and that the Design of *Moses* is to shew, that God was the Creator of these Things, and therefore the only Object of divine Worship.

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In the Account this truly eminent Writer gives in the Beginning of the Book called *Genesis*, he treats, I apprehend, of the first Production of Matter, and the Method the divine Wisdom took in the Disposition of it, *only* as it respects *our World*, or the Things visible to us in the Heavens and the Earth, or what we call the *Solar System*, and not of the Production of other Worlds, or Angels and invisible Powers; though they also are the Creatures of God, but probably had their Existence long before; for we read of the *Morning Stars rejoicing together* in Celebration of these other Works of the ALMIGHTY, which we are considering; where by the Word *Stars*, many Expositors understand the Angelic Host.

In the first Place *Moses* tells us, that God gave Existence to the general Matter or Substance of our World, * called

* The Idea of the first Matter being a Kind of heterogeneous chaotic Fluid, or inert Substance, obtained amongst the ancient Philosophers; *Thales*, and

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by him *the Heavens* and *the Earth*; and that then was the first Beginning of our Time.—In *the Beginning* GOD created the *Heavens and the Earth*, (viz.) the whole of this visible World, the heavenly Bodies, as well as the Earth; and at first, very probably all was one entire general CHAOS, or mighty Heap of every Kind of Matter, blended together without any Order;—there is, at least, nothing in the sacred Text, to lead us to think the contrary. However, this Earth, we are expressly told, was such a *Chaos* (and why not the Bodies which made a Part of the same System) and that Darknefs or Night entirely involved it. Darknefs I suppose, therefore, to be, an innate primary essential Pro-

the first *Zeno*, and others. *Ovid. Met. Lib. i. Fab. i.* mentions it as a received Truth,

Unus erat toto naturæ vultus in orbo,

Quem dixere CHAOS, rudis indigestaque Moles, &c.

And *Helvetius* there remarks that *Euripides* says, Ο δ' ερανος τε γαια τ' ην μορφημια. — That is, *Heaven and Earth had one and the same Appearance.*

All borrowed from *Moses*, or from Tradition.

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perty of the first Matter, as much so as Extension and Resistance, and not a mere Privation or Absence of Light; and, that Light is a peculiar Property, or new Species of Matter, added by the Almighty, for the farther Display of his Glory, and for answering many other Purposes, his infinite Wisdom had in view.

Moses very evidently confines his Account principally to what passed upon our *Earth*, and *those Parts* of the Solar System that lie within our View; but what he observes of the Earth, may be very well understood, as passing upon the other chaotic Bodies at the same Time respectively,* according to their

* As *Moses* treats more especially of the Formation of our Earth, and its Appendages, he, therefore, says nothing expressly of the chaotic State of the other Bodies in this System, but only tells us, in the General, that God made the Heavens and the Earth, and the *Stars also*. However from this Hint we may very justly suppose, those Bodies *were* in the same chaotic State, and probably all constituted one and the same general Mass.

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peculiarly different Natures and Uses in this System in general, or allowing for their peculiar Differences. But he confines his Narrative thus particularly to the Earth, because he wrote for the Instruction of *Mankind* who inhabited it. Had he written for the Inhabitants of *Venus*, *Jupiter*, &c. he would doubtless have been as particular in describing the Changes made in them by the Operations of the divine Power. And, as he did not Design to teach us *Philosophy* but *Religion*, it was sufficient for his Purpose, to give us such an Account as he has done; though the more this Account is fairly examined, the more it will appear to be perfectly consistent with the true *Philosophy*, or Knowledge of the Universe, and with those Systems that are founded in real Observation and Experience, such as the great *Newton* has so fully established upon the most accurate Enquiries into the Principles and Operations of Nature. Accordingly I have connected

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nected the following *Paraphrase* (which goes entirely upon the *Newtonian System*) in such a Manner with the Text, that this Congruity might the more clearly appear. For, by the Expressions in the *Paraphrase* running so easily and fairly into the *Text*, it is evident, that, if the divine Spirit had so pleased, *Moses* might have so enlarged upon his Subject, and have expressed himself in some such Manner, agreeable to the very Sentiment and Language of this Philosophy, and probably would have done so, had he written with philosophic Views. But his Design was infinitely more interesting and important, and he has here expressed himself in the best Manner to answer that Design.

But to return to the Narrative—The next Thing was the Reduction of this *Chaos* into Order, by the Energy of the ALMIGHTY SPIRIT, operating upon it, and inspiring the whole Mass with such Powers of *Attraction*, *Repulsion*, *Cohesion*,

sion, &c. * as might serve for general Principles and Laws, adapted to such Ends and Purposes as infinite Wisdom had in view, and which soon after appeared;—particularly impressed upon the *chaotic Earth* such a peculiar impulsive Force, as gave it a perpetual Motion round its own Axis, in regular Time, (the like to the other chaotic Bodies) by which Motion the Light, which was at the same Time created, might be divided from the Darknefs upon it, in due Proportion, and regular Succession, and in order to produce what we call Day and Night, to the whole Earth; which, without this diurnal Motion upon its Axis, must have been all perpetual Darknefs in one Part, and all perpetual Light in the other.

As to the Creation of *Light*, the first

* That is, the Almighty Power put the whole in Motion, when, probably, all the great Bodies that compose our System were separated from each other, and had the like Movement round their Axis imparted to them respectively; and all at the Time when God said, *Let there be Light.*

born

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born of all Order and Beauty in our World, I suppose it to have been at the very Instant of Time when the Spirit of God moved upon the Face of the Waters, and imparted Activity to inert Matter; and when God *said let there be Light, and there was Light.* * But I don't understand this of Light *merely*, and as a Thing generally diffused, or as collected into one Body by itself alone, as some do, but of the instantaneous kindling up of all the (before) chaotic Bodies; designed to be the Recipients of this new Species of Property of Matter, and to be the Mediums of its Diffusion. This Supposition gives a much more grand and striking Idea of the divine Power, and the Manner of its Operation in this Case,

* The Sublimity of the Sentiment, expressed in these plain simple Words, is beyond all Parallel—*Longinus* takes Notice of this in his Treatise on the Sublime, with Applause. Some (as *Le Clerc* and *Huet*) deny there is any Thing sublime here—though at the same Time the latter allows the parallel Expression in the Psalms—*He spake and it was done*, to be sublime. See W. Smith's *Longinus*, p. 41.

than

than the common Notion can possibly do; and gives a peculiar Fulness of Sense and Dignity to this justly admired Sentence.—What rapturous Surprise must it be to the celestial Intelligences, who beheld the Effects of Almighty Power in the Production of this World, to see ten Thousand mighty Globes, before enwrappt in the thickest Darknefs, kindle up into Suns and Moons, and Stars, and spread their Glories far and wide through the Immensity of Space !

- “ Nor pass’d uncelebrated, nor unsung
 “ By the celestial Choirs, when orient Light,
 “ Exhaling first from Darknefs, they beheld ;
 “ Birth Day of Heaven and Earth ! with Joy
 “ and Shout
 “ The hollow universal Orb they fill’d ;
 “ And touch’d their golden Harps and hymning
 “ prais’d
 “ God, and his Works ; Créator him they sung,
 “ Both when first Evening was, and when first
 “ Morn.” *

And what very much confirms this Opinion is, that if we understand this

* Milton Par. Lost. Book vii. ver. 253.

Production of Light, to respect Light in *general every where diffused*, it would have spread every where alike over *all* the chaotic Earth; and consequently there could have been then no Distinction or Difference between *Day* and *Night*, *Evening* and *Morning*, as there was on the first Day, but it would have been every where all Day, or, at least, the same Twilight. And if we understand it of Light in a collective Body or as Milton beautifully expresseth it —

“ Spher’d in a radiant Cloud.”—

We have nothing in the sacred Text to warrant such a Sense particularly; and it seems more natural and congruous to that *Perfection*, with which the DIVINE BEING appears to operate, and effect his Purpose in every other Instance: To suppose the Expression—*Let there be Light, and there was Light*, to mean the instantaneous Kindling up the Sun and Stars, and their throwing upon the planetary Worlds around them, such Measures of
Light

Light as was necessary to distinguish one Part from the other, Day from Night, or as *Moses* himself expresses it, *to divide the Light from the Darknefs*; and particularly with respect to this Earth, where the Difference is marked still farther, by observing that the *Evening and the Morning*, or the Darknefs and the Light, made the first, or, as it might be rendered, *one* [entire] *Day*: That is, the Reckoning was begun in the Evening, or during the Darknefs; but the Sun, &c. being kindled up there was Light, which continued 'till, by the Revolution of the Earth, the illuminated Part was again involved in Darknefs, and so finished a complete Day, the first of our Time. *

* If we understand the Light created on the first Day to be a collective Body of Light *sojourning for a while in a cloudy Tabernacle* as *Milton* does; then the fourth Day's Work might be considered as an Efflux of Light produced from this grand Fountain, at the divine Command, and instantaneously kindling up the several Luminaries in the Heavens, which before, like the Earth, were all chaotic Darknefs. See *Dr. Patrick's Comment. Gen. i. 14.*

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The only Objection of Consequence, that I can think of at present against this Hypothesis, is this—It is said, Verse 14. “That God said *let there be Lights in the Firmament of the Heavens*, &c.—And, “therefore, if we suppose these Lights “to have been made before, as I have “done, there must be a gross Tautology, and this fourth Day’s Work be “a Work about nothing.”—By no Means,—For though I suppose the several Luminaries to have been kindled up before, and the Earth, and the rest of the moveable Bodies in the System, to have had their diurnal Motions given them respectively on the *first* Day, yet, on the *fourth*, I suppose the Almighty to have settled, by an unalterable Decree, the various Uses of these Luminaries, and to have appointed them, not only to Measure out the lesser Portions of Time, as Day and Night, but also the greater of Months, and Years, and the various Seasons, in perpetual Succession.

To this important End a new Display of the divine Power took Place on this
fourth

fourth Day, (viz.) the communicating to the Earth, and to the other *planetary* Bodies, both primary and secondary, such a projectile Force as carried them round the Sun as their common Centre, all in their several respective Times, according to their several and respective Distances; by which Means the pleasing and useful Variety of the several Seasons of Summer and Winter, Spring and Autumn, are regularly produced.—By a peculiar Principle or Property in Matter, there is, indeed, a strong natural Tendency in those Bodies to their common Centre; but so exactly did infinite Wisdom balance this projectile Force against that Tendency, as to preserve them all in their respective Orbits, with the most surprising Regularity, from that Moment to this Day. And as a farther Expression

* This Tendency, or gravitating Principle, and the projectile Force, might commence together; or, if the former existed before the latter, it might be so over-ruled by the divine Power, as not to operate 'till the other took Place.

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of the divine Goodness, they were then also *ordained* to be the constant *Signs* of the Revolutions and Changes of Time; and powerfully instructive *Witnesses* of the Being, Perfection, and governing Providence of the DEITY.

Hence it appears that the Work of the fourth Day, was every Way as magnificent and stupendous, as any of the other: And that imparting to the Earth, and to the other Planets this centrifugal Motion, was absolutely necessary to answer several very important Ends in the Economy of the World; as without it the Inhabitants of those respective Bodies instead of enjoying the useful Divisions of Time, and the pleasing Vicissitude of Seasons, before hinted, would have found a dull, and comparatively uninteresting Sameness spread over the whole Face of Nature. This Effect, therefore, of the almighty Power, though not *expressed*, must undoubtedly be *implied* in the 14th Verse, in those Words,—*And God said, let there be Lights in the Firmament of Heaven, and let them be*
for

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for Signs and for Seasons, and for Days, and Years.

It was also a Part of the Business of the fourth Day, to appoint the two Luminaries, that appear to us the greatest, their respective Stations, and to serve the particular Necessaries and Conveniences of Mankind. The greater, called the *Sun*, to afford them the more abundant Light requisite for the important Business of the Day; and the lesser, the *Moon*, and the Stars to cheer, with their milder Beams, the darksome Hours of the Night, and favour our Repose.

But the Objection against what was said relative to the Works of the *first* Day, particularly about the Creation of Light, has led us to consider the Work of the *fourth* (though naturally connected with it) rather out of its Place, as to the Order of Time; let us now return to what is recorded of the Business of the *second* Day, as that also has some Relation to the more particular Subject before us.

The ALMIGHTY having communicated to the chaotic Earth a diurnal Motion,

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on the first Day; he presently afterwards (probably by the Medium of that Motion) brought into Existence the FIRMAMENT, or *Atmosphere*; that is, the Body of Air which furrounds the Earth, and by which the Light is more commodiously diffused, and spread over the half of the terrestrial Sphere at once, in full Day; and so on progressively, over the whole. And by the Time this Work was fully executed, and its Uses fixed, the Earth had made *another* complete Revolution round her Axis, and thus finished the second Day.—I say the Earth had made *another* Revolution, because if the revolving Power, first imparted to it, had not been continued, there could not have been Evening and Morning in Succession, as we find there was; unless we suppose the Body of the Sun, or Light, to have moved round the Earth in that Time, which is every Way against Nature to suppose, and quite the Reverse of what *Moses* has written; for it is observable, he does not say, that the Spirit of God moved upon the *Face of the Body of Light*,

or

or *Sun*, or that he impressed any such Motion upon it, * but, that he did so with respect to the *Earth*. And, indeed, this Motivity was communicated to it, before any Mention is made of the Existence of the *Sun*, or even of the *Light*. This second Day, therefore, must be made by the *Earth's* diurnal Motion; and not by the Body of *Light* or *Sun* moving round the *Earth*: To suppose this would be doing Violence to Common Sense, and contradict the clearest Demonstrations of the Conduct of the ALMIGHTY in other Instances, where we see him performing every Thing by the simplest Mediums, and in the shortest and most direct Manner. And thus, by the unceasing Perpetuity of this Revolution of the *Earth*, Day and Night are continued to us, as the unalterable Ordinances of God.

* I readily grant that the *Sun* has a Motion also, round his own Axis at least, if not round his Centre; but there is no Mention of this in the Sacred Text; though there is of the *Earth's* being moved.

The Nature and Use of this Atmosphere, or Body of Air, here called the FIRMAMENT, * belongs to another Branch of Philosophy rather than to that immediately before us ; and, therefore, not enlarged upon here. One of its very important Uses, however, is pointed out to us in the sacred Text, (viz.) that it is the grand Medium of separating the Waters: Vast Quantities of them, being treasured up in the Clouds, and Vapours floating there and occasionally discharged upon the Earth, for the Purposes of Vegetation, and the Refreshment of

* The Hebrew Word *Rakiah* signifies *Expansion*, and may here comprise the whole Heaven (viz.) the ætherial Expanse, or the immense Space, in which the fixed Stars are placed, as well as the ærial Expanse, Atmosphere, or Body of Air which is nearest to us, and in which we breathe, but which perhaps, is more immediately referred to in the sacred Text, as it is the Receptacle of the Waters which are above the Earth. The Septuagint reads it *στερωμα*, i. e. *Firmament*, because the Air, though vastly extended, and fluid, yet continues *firm* in its Place. See Patrick's Com. Gen. Ch. i. ver. 6.

Man

OF THE CREATION. 71

Man and the various Tribes of Animals upon it.*

From what has been said in the foregoing Pages it will appear, I trust, with some good Degree of Evidence, that the *Mosaic Account of Creation* is just and rational, and may be explained in perfect Consistency with itself, and with the best Systems of the World, founded upon the most accurate Observations; so that were we to consider *Moses* even as an uninspired Writer only, we should be obliged to acknowledge him worthy of the highest Credit;—as a *Man* he appears possessed of the greatest Abilities, Integrity, and Honour;—as a Philosopher of the greatest Wisdom:—He lived long before any of the Sages known to us by that Appellation; had all the Advantages of a finished Education a-

* According to 2 Pet. iii. 5, 6. it appears that the original Atmosphere consisted much more of Water than the present, which has more of Fire in it, agreeable to the Design of Providence in the respective Modes of the Destruction of the Earth. See Note * † in the Paraphrase.

mongst the Literati of *Egypt*, and consequently must know as much of the Origin of the World, as could be known by the most antient Learning, assisted by a Tradition much nearer to that Origin, than any Writer we are acquainted with.

But this Account carries with it all the strongest and clearest Marks of *divine Inspiration*; not only in its perfect Agreement with the best explanatory Systems of the Phenomena of Nature, but also because there is an inimitable Simplicity, and Dignity in the *Manner* of the Relation, such as becomes the *Oracles of the LIVING GOD*;—and because the evident Design of the whole is, not merely to give us an unmeaning Display of the Wisdom and Power of God, or afford us Materials for curious Speculation, or natural Science only; but to answer some high and important Ends in the *moral* World, lay a solid Foundation for the Practice of true Religion and Virtue; or the Belief of the moral Government of God, and the Reasonableness of our Subjection to it. And, indeed, it

is

is impossible for a Mind thoroughly penetrated with the Idea of the Existence of an ALL-PERFECT BEING; and to consider HIM as the Author of so many stupendous and glorious Worlds as come within *our* Notice, without feeling the most admiring and devout Thoughts of him; or to contemplate such a Profusion of Goodness as runs through the whole, and not love and confide in him. Accordingly we find the heavenly Hosts, represented as so struck with the View of his adorable Perfections, as manifested in these Works, *that they fall down before Him, and worship Him, casting down their Crowns before his Throne, saying—Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power, for thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure they are and were created.* * They, indeed, behold these Works

* Rev. iv. 10, 11. What Infatuation then must possess those Pretenders to supreme Wisdom, and the only *true* Philosophy, who dare to charge so illustrious a Writer as *Moses* with Absurdity and Nonsense in the Account he has given us of Creation!

Hence also appears the childish Weakness of the
of

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of the ALMIGHTY with infinitely more Clearness and perfect Comprehension than we can do;—but even *we* may see enough to excite in us the *same Kind* of devout Affection, when we consider them seriously. And if, from the limited View of these Works, which we have been now taking, we find so much Reason to admire and adore their divine Author, how must our Admiration be raised, and our Devotions enlivened, when we reflect, that *this System*, of which our Sun is the Centre, vast as it appears to us, is nothing in Comparison of the Universe:—For it is well known, that the fixed Stars are at an immeasurable Distance from us, and from one another; and that it is more than probable, they are so many Suns to

Objections some have made against the *Copernican System* because it teaches us to believe, that Day and Night, and the Diversity of Seasons in the Year are owing to the Diurnal and Annual Revolutions of the *Earth*, and not to those of the *Sun*: For however contradictory this Doctrine may be to vulgar Prejudices, it is most certainly consistent with the Account *Moses* has here given us by divine Authority.

other

OF THE CREATION. 75

other planetary Worlds revolving round them;—and so on beyond the utmost Stretch of human Imagination.—The Mind even faints while it labours to comprehend the whole Extent of these Regions of created Nature! But what is all created Nature to THAT BEING who spoke it into Existence by the Word of this Power! If our boldest Thoughts are lost in the *Greatness* of the former, how much more so in the IMMENSITY of the latter, *the GOD over all!* Here then let us pause,—and humbly wondering say, how worthy of our profoundest Veneration, our warmest Devotions, our most exalted and everlasting Praises, is this GREATEST OF BEINGS!—How shocking the Stupidity of those Pretenders to Wisdom, who can think a Moment of the Reality of his Existence thus strikingly demonstrated, and not give him the *Glory due to his Name!*

But all the devout Affections of our Souls will be still more abundantly enlarged, and kindled into even rapturous Astonishment, when we consider the GREAT PARENT of Nature sending his

ONLY

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ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, the *Brightness of his Glory* into this little obscure Abode of fallen Man, to become incarnate, suffer and die for our Sins, and *redeem us to God by his Blood!* Here all the Beams of divine Benevolence meet as in their Centre, and pour upon our benighted Minds the Light of eternal Day! Here it appears, indeed, with the most delightful Evidence *that God is Love*: For, though Mankind are more particularly and deeply interested in these Expressions of infinite Goodness, we are told that the *Angels also desire to look into them*, who doubtless feel unutterable Pleasure in the Discoveries they make; —And it is highly probable that Myriads of intelligent Creatures, Inhabitants of numberless Worlds that compose the Universe, are the wiser, the holier, and the happier for this astonishing Instance of the divine Condescension and Love to us, and join their Hallelujahs with those of Men and Angels, in one grand Chorus of Praise, to HIM THAT SITS UPON THE THRONE, AND TO THE LAMB FOR EVER AND EVER! Amen!

A P A R A-

A
P A R A P H R A S E
O N T H E
FIRST NINETEEN VERSES
O F T H E
First Chapter of GENESIS,
And on the First Verse of the Second,
Agreeable to the Doctrine of the preceding ESSAY.

GEN. CHAP. I.

I. **I**N the Beginning, of *Time, or Duration as measured by Man on Earth, and of his first Day*, God created, *i. e. brought into Existence out of nothing, the visible Heavens, or Regions of ethereal and aerial Space,* “and all the Host of “them” (*Chap ii. 1st.*) *more especially what Men call the Solar System, and particularly the Earth, the Part of which, as*
writing

writing for the Instruction of Mankind, I shall chiefly confine my History.

2 *And at the first the whole was one general Chaos, or unformed heterogeneous Substance, * the Earth, particularly, was a kind of fluid Mass of Matter, without Form, and void, or a confused Heap, without any orderly Arrangement of its Parts, destitute of all prolific Power, and of the various Creatures that now replenish and adorn it. And Darknefs was upon the Face of the Deep, or this vast watery profound of chaotic Matter. And the Spirit of God moved upon the Face of the Waters, or chaotic Fluid, particularly of this Earth, so as to put the whole into such a Motion, as carried it round its own Axis, in the Space of*

* I suppose the first general chaotic Body of Matter, included both the present Heavens and the Earth, or the whole of the Solar System at large, and that the several great Bodies, that compose it, were afterwards separated; though *Moses*, as not writing a System of Philosophy, has not particularly mentioned that Circumstance, but proceeds to the History of the Formation of our Earth, and the Bodies relative immediately to it, and of these latter speaks only in the general.

twenty

twenty four Hours, which is therefore called its diurnal Motion.

3 And at the same Time, God said let there be Light, and, in a Moment innumerable Globes of Fire were kindled up, through the immense Space of the Universe, and thus there was Light thrown upon the Earth, and all the other particular chaotic Bodies through the whole System, that were capable of receiving it.

4 And God saw the Light that it was good, i. e. every Way agreeable to his Will, and a most important Benefit and Ornament to created Nature; and God divided the Light from the Darknefs; i. e. ordained an eternal Distinction between them, to answer respectively the particular Purposes of his Providence; and so, that only a Part of the several opaque Bodies in the Universe, not having it inherent in themselves, might be enlightened fully at one and the same Time.

5 And God called the Light Day, and the Darknefs he called Night; and, as by this Time the chaotic Earth had made
one

*one entire Revolution round its Axis, the Evening, on which GOD began this Work, and the Morning, or that Part of the twenty-four Hours in which the Light continued to the same Part of the Terrestrial Globe, were (i. e. completed) the first Day, of our Time. **

6 And then GOD said let there be a Firmament, an atmosphere, or Body of Air, * † expanding itself and surrounding the Earth entirely, and let it be, in the Midst of or between the Waters, that are designed to be treasured up in it, in Clouds and Vapours above the Earth, in Order to be distilled or shed down upon it in Rains and Dews, for the Refreshment of Man and Beast, and the Purposes of Vegetation, and let it divide the Waters of this Sort, from

* Hence the Hebrews always began their Day in the Evening, and ended it at the Beginning of the next Evening, when a new Day began.

* † And probably the whole immense Expanse of ethereal Matter above the Air in which the Stars are fixed, and the Planets roll.

Waters

*Waters that remain on the Earth and make a Part of it. **

7 And, accordingly, God made the Firmament *to answer these Purposes*, and divided the Waters which were under the Firmament, *upon the Earth*, from the Waters which were above, *and floated in*, the Firmament; and it was so, *done that this Order remains the same to this Day, and will do so to the End of Time.*

8 And God called the Firmament, *or Expanse of Air, &c. Heaven, because, like the infinitely larger Expanse of Æther, it surrounds the Earth, and because all the heavenly Bodies, perceived by Mankind, seem to be fixed in it, as their lasting Habitation, and, by this Time the yet unfinished Earth had made another Revolution upon its Axis, agreeable to the Design of God in first giving it that Motion, so that, the*

* It is reasonable to suppose, that the Antediluvian Atmosphere differed very much from ours, being replenished more abundantly with Water, and served to supply the Universal Deluge, as ours with Fire for the Purposes of the universal Conflagration.

Evening and the Morning were the second Day.

9 And God said let the Waters, *or more liquid Parts of the terrestrial Globe,* under the Heavens *or Atmosphere,* be gathered together in one Place, *separate from the more solid Parts,* and let the dry Land, *or more solid Parts* appear *entirely distinct,* and it was so.

10 And God called the dry Land Earth, and the gathering together of the Waters, *in large Quantities,* called the Seas; and God saw that it was, *all as he intended it should be,* good.

11 And God said let the Earth bring forth Grass, the Herb yielding Seed, and the fruit Tree yielding Fruit after his Kind, whose Seed is in itself upon the Earth, and it was so.

12 And the Earth brought forth Grass, and Herb yielding Seed, after his Kind; and the Tree yielding Fruit, whose Seed is in itself, after his Kind; and God saw that it was good.

13 And, *the Earth having now made another Revolution upon its Axis,* the Evening
ing

ing and Morning were the third Day.

14 And GOD said let, *the several Luminous Bodies, lately kindled up in the Æthereal Expanse, there be and remain fixed throughout all Time for Lights in the Firmament of Heaven, to divide the Day from the Night, as at the first, and let them be also for Signs and for Seasons, and for Days and Years, for the Use of the Earth and its Inhabitants, and so of the other Planets respectively. And to answer this End the Almighty at the same Time communicated to the Earth, and the other planetary Bodies a PROJECTILE Force, which (controuled by the Power of Gravitation) served to carry them all round the Sun as a common Centre, though in very different Periods of Time, according to their respective Distances; and thus were produced the several Changes, so necessary to the Beauty and well-being of the Animal and vegetable World.*

15 And, GOD said let them continue to be for Lights in the Firmament of Heaven, to give Light upon the Earth, and regulate the several Seasons in perpetual Succession, and it was so.

16 And God *having made what appear to the Inhabitants of the Earth, and for their Use especially, two great Lights, called the Sun and the Moon, he appointed the greater Light the Sun, to rule the Day; and the lesser Light, the Moon, to rule the Night; for which Purpose, amongst others, he made the Stars also, both fixed and erratic.*

17 And God *set, i. e. ordained them to appear in the Firmament of the Heaven, to give Light upon the Earth particularly, and preserves them continually in their several Stations and Orbits, for this and other benevolent Purposes of his Providence.*

18 And, *especially, to rule over the Day, and over the Night, and to divide the Light from the Darknes, for the better Accommodation and Use of Man, and other living Creatures upon the Earth; and God saw that it was good.*

19 And, *the Earth having now finished another Revolution on its Axis, the Evening and the Morning were the fourth Day.*

Chap. ii.

Thus the *Creation and Disposition of the visible* Heavens and the Earth were finished, and all the Host of them; *that is to say, the whole Solar System, of Sun and Planets, both primary and secondary; the Comets and fixed Stars, with their respective Planets invisible to Men, were all brought into Existence, and reduced to Order, replenished with their respective Powers and Properties, and appointed to remain fixed in, or roll through the immense Space of created Nature, and so fulfil the Purposes of the Almighty's Wisdom and Goodness, and lead his intelligent Creatures to love and adore him.*

I would conclude this Essay with observing, that the striking Representation of the Solar System, which that noble Piece of Mechanism, the ORRERY gives us, will abundantly illustrate and confirm all I have said, and at the same Time excite, in a well ordered Mind, a reverential Admiration of the glorious Perfections of the great Creator. An Hint to this Purpose, the Reader may take

take from the following Lines, which I have entitl'd THE ORRERY, * and which were intended first, to assist the young Mind in forming a general Idea of this System, and lead it to the great Former of the whole, and the gracious SAVIOUR of Men.

* The *Orrery* is an astronomical Machine, designed to give such as are not acquainted with the cœlestial Phenomena, some general Idea of them, according to the *Copernican* System; where the SUN is represented as fixed in the Centre of the whole; and *Mercury*, *Venus*, the *Earth* and her *Moon*; *Jupiter* with his four *Moons*, and *Saturn* with his five, and his lucid *Ring*, moving round it in their respective Times; and likewise the several *Moons* moving round their respective primary Planets in the same Manner.

THE ORRERY;

OR, A

Display of the SOLAR SYSTEM.

"The Undevout Astronomer is Mad."

Young.

I.

THERE in the Centre shines the SUN;
Here *Mercury*, *Venus*, *Earth* and *Moon*,
Glide through the *Æthereal* Plain;
Next, by himself, rolls fiery *Mars*,
Then belted *Jove*, and his *four Stars*,
A bright lunarian Train.

II.

Dim *Saturn* there, on Verge of Night,
With his *five Moons*, and Ring of Light,
His ample Circuit runs;
Beyond all these, in Space immense,
The fixed Stars their Light dispense,
To other Worlds the Suns.

III. LORD,

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III.

LORD, while these Wonders I survey,
And trace them thro' their azure Way,
I read thy mighty Name !
Their Light is but a Shade of THINE ;
Yet wheresoe'er they roll or shine,
THY Glories they proclaim.

IV.

But when, by Faith, I stretch my Sight,
To Worlds of uncreated Light,
Still brighter Wonders rise ;
The Glories of thy saving Grace,
Full beaming in IMMANUEL's Face,
Salute my ravish'd Eyes.

V.

Let Sun and Moons forsake the Sky,
And all their splendid Beauties die,
That Grace shall still endure ;
JESUS still shine, and round his Throne,
In Heavens to mortal Eyes unknown,
His Saints shall live secure.

ESSAY.

ESSAY III.
ON
THE NATURE AND NECESSITY
OF
RELIGION.
In a Series of
LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE Letters are not meant as an Attack in Form upon the Abettors of Infidelity, but to give the well disposed enquiring Mind a rational and comprehensive View of RELIGION, as founded on the Reason and Nature of Things, and as it lies in the sacred Writings taken in their plain common-sense Meaning, unadulterated by over refined Criticisms,

ticisms, and sophistical Daubings. A Service of some Importance, especially to young Persons, and such as through the Want of a well conducted Education, or from their peculiar Situations in Life, may be more exposed to the artful Insinuations of the Enemies of Christianity; the Number of which is not small.

Though some Things advanced in these Letters may appear out of the common Way, both to the *Orthodox* and *Heterodox*; yet, if read and considered with Candour, the Author trusts they will be found, not only well intended, but admissible without the least Prejudice to any one essential Doctrine of the Gospel or Duty of Life.

That Scheme of *Religion*, however, must certainly be the best, and most worthy of our Choice, which has the most natural and powerful Tendency to make us truly wise and good;—most devout towards GOD; most humble and penitent for our Sins; most chaste, temperate, and every Way sober in ourselves; most just and benevolent towards Mankind,
and

and most deeply sensible of our Obligations to redeeming Grace.

However rational, or however Orthodox our Opinions, and however warm and lively our zeal about them, if they are not productive of solid Piety and Virtue they are nothing to the Purpose. And it is possible that the different Dispositions and Feelings of the human Mind in different Persons, may render *some* Diversity in their religious Sentiments necessary, while in the present imperfect State. What would most effectually move a rational Thinker, would have very little or no Influence upon one of weaker Intellects, and warmer Passions; and so in the contrary Case, which should teach us to treat those who differ from us, with the greatest Candour, and with that *Charity that thinketh no Evil.*

L E T T E R I.

*A general View of the Subject—shewing
that there must be Religion, because Man
is endued with Reason and Moral Sense.*

DEAR SIR,

ACCORDING to my promise I here send you my first Letter on RELIGION. A great and interesting Subject. By RELIGION I mean, the Belief, Acknowledgment, and Worship of the ONE ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD, and Obedience to his Laws. And thus I include the Practice both of Piety and Virtue, as being indeed inseparably connected, and absolutely necessary to form a just and perfect Character amongst Men.

It has been said by some Philosophers, that there may be Religion without Virtue, and Virtue without Religion. I grant there may be some *Pretensions* to the one where the other is wanting, but not the
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the *Reality*. An Atheist cannot be a complete Moralist, or carry his Morality beyond his present Convenience. And even the little superficial Semblance of Virtue he may possess, is owing to the natural Force of a Principle in him, the Existence of which he denies. On the other Hand, if the *Immoral* make any Pretensions to Religion, they are *merely Pretensions*, and in *Reality* nothing more than Hypocrisy or Superstition. True Religion, such as I mean, is a vital Principle of divine Love, uniting the Will of a moral Agent with the Will of God. True Virtue is the Imitation of God, resulting from that Principle; or a Copy of the moral Perfections of the DEITY (so far as they can be copied by us) from a Principle of Love to him. For as the Apostle expresseth it, *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God and God in him*. That is to say, he that is truly religious, loves God and his Neighbour from his Heart; which includes the whole of Religion and Virtue.

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This is the Apostle's Philosophy; and it is the most simple, just, manly.*

Religion supposes two Things—*First*, that there is a God, or Supreme Being possessed of all possible Perfection, the Maker and *moral Governor* of the World. *Secondly*, that Man is capable of this mo-

* It must be granted, that *some* Degree of Virtue, so far as respects social Life, or the Duties we owe to one another, is found amongst some of the most unenlightened Heathens, who have nothing that can be called *Religion*, or the Worship of God amongst them:—but then, this is all;—and having no Notion of a God the moral Governor of the World, nor of a future State, all the Motives to that little Virtue they have, arise only from the Hope and Fear of the Good and Evil of the present Life. And though they believe that some invisible Powers distribute this temporal Good and Evil as due, yet they pay them no religious Worship, except that of appealing to them in their Oaths. See *Marsden's Hist. of Sumatra*, p. 198. 250, &c. But even these poor Creatures are not absolute *Atheists*. An *Atheist* believes no invisible Power that punishes Perjury, even in this World, and therefore cannot be bound by the most sacred Tie of an Oath.

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ral Government of God, and *actually* under it. These Truths are so near to self-evident, so agreeable to the Constitution and Feelings of our Nature, and so clear of all Absurdity, or Inconsistency with Reason, that they have been universally admitted, by, at least, the civilized Part of Mankind, in all Ages of the World, a few sceptical Philosophers excepted, who, with all their Subtilty, could never make even themselves believe the contrary, or rest intirely Satisfied in their own Schemes, finding something in their Hearts opposing their favourite Doctrines, and pleading the Cause of Religion. MAN feels himself a dependent Creature, earnestly desirous of Happiness; and when he thinks without Prejudice, feels that Religion is the only sure Ground on which he can safely rest the Hope of obtaining it. The more attentively he contemplates himself, the World about him, and the Evidence that every where pours in upon him, of the Existence of a DEITY, and of his moral Perfections, the more clearly he

he perceives there must be such a Thing as RELIGION ; and, if any *Religion* at all, that it must be that taught in the BIBLE ; there being no other that will stand the Test of a sober, rational, and impartial Examination, this will in every essential Article, when taken, as it lies there, in its genuine Simplicity.

By MAN here, indeed, I mean the more intelligent and civilized Part of the human Race ; *mere Savages*, are scarcely possessed of those abstract and spiritual Ideas which *Religion* necessarily implies, and consequently not of any Language suited to the proper Expression of them ; yet even Savages are capable of being taught such Ideas and Language as Experience shews. They are rational Beings, and possess some Degree of moral Light and Feeling, and, therefore, may be soon brought to conceive tolerably well of the leading Truths of Religion by proper Instruction :—As ; that, they owe their Existence to some living Power invisible to Sense ; that this invisible Power is the great Cause of all other

other Beings, and fovereign Lord of all; that they are dependent on him for the Continuance of their Existence, and owe all their Comforts to his Goodness; that what they perceive of moral Right and Wrong, are but the general Outlines of his moral Law written in their Hearts; that they owe him religious Reverence, Love, Gratitude, Obedience, Confidence; that their being liable to Sicknefs and Death, is owing to their having failed of their Duty, and offended him; that his Favour is the greatest Happinefs, and his Displeasure the greatest Mifery, &c. Thus instructed they may be led on to the main diftinguifhing Doctrines of Chriftianity: And the very *Capacity* for fuch Instructiion fhews that the human Mind is formed for Religion.

As for the Diversity of Opinions about the *Modes* and *Forms* of religious Faith and Worship, which the metaphysical or superstitious Geniuses of some of the Professors of Chriftianity have invented and adorned with the venerable Title of ORTHODOXY, in Contradistinction to

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all who entertain different Sentiments, we have nothing to do with them here, in this general View of the Subject. All truly good Men, of rational Piety, agree in every Thing *fundamentally necessary* to the truly religious Character. As for such as are governed by the Caprice of false Philosophy, and Self-conceit; or the obstinate Prejudices of weak Zeal, Ignorance, and Enthusiasm, they would wrangle about the plainest Truths in the World (if they had nothing else to wrangle about) and at the same Time swallow the grossest Absurdities, when they happen to suit their vitiated Taste. But none of these Things afford any solid Objection against true Religion, any more than the different Opinions of Mankind about the Doctrines of Reason, would do against Reason itself. In the Religion of the Bible, every Thing *essential* to Virtue and Happiness is as clearly and fully expressed to the serious and teachable Mind, as any Subject proposed to the Understanding of Mankind can be. In the present State of human Nature,

Nature, a Degree of Weakness will unavoidably mingle itself with all our Reasonings, even about the most common Concerns of this Life, as well as about our Religion; but as this will not warrant our Neglect of the former, it certainly will not warrant our Rejection of the latter. Our Mistakes will be forgiven, if our Hearts are right in the Sight of God; and our Conduct sincerely pious, just, and benevolent.

Man is the only Creature of this lower World that is capable of Religion; which shews that he is designed for it, and that it is his Duty and Interest, to attend to it. What renders him the Subject of Religion is, his being endued with a *moral Sense*, * or a Capacity for *moral Light and Feeling*; That is, with, a

* The *moral* Nature of the human Soul affords a much stronger Argument for its *Immortality* than any Thing that can be said about its *Immateriality*. For we may argue thus—"We see Man capable of thinking and reasoning about Things of a moral and spiritual Nature, and of extending his Thoughts beyond the present Life, which proves that he is under the *moral Government* of God; and conse-

a Faculty or Power of Perception, Reasoning, Consciouſness, &c. not in reſpect of *natural* Subjects only, but alſo particularly in reſpect of *moral*, when properly preſented to him; ſo that he is capable of perceiving the Obligations and Motives of his Duty to God and Man, and of reaſoning upon them, and feeling their Force.

This *moral* Principle or Capacity in Man is eſſential to his Nature, the grand Characteriſtic that diſtinguiſhes him from the Brute. 'Tis in reſpect of this that he is ſaid *now*, as well as at *firſt*, to be *made after the Image of God*; * which is

“quently deſigned for a future State of immortal Exiſtence.” But even this is no more than the Evidence of *Probability* though *ſtrong Probability*. For full and entire Satisfaction, we muſt have Recourſe to the ſacred Oracles. Reaſon approves of the Idea of the Soul's Immortality, when hinted, but cannot, clearly and indubitably demonſtrate it, without the BIBLE; even traditionary Revelation will go but a little Way towards abſolutely Deciſion in this Point.

* Gen. i. 27. 2 Cor. xi. 9. Jam. iii. 9. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Col. iii. 10.

never

never said of any of the brute Creation, and which, therefore, is his greatest Glory, next to that still more complete Likeness which takes Place when he becomes a *new Man in Christ*, and which will be perfected in the heavenly World; it is, indeed, the Ground on which that Likeness is drawn by the divine Hand. Amongst the brutal Tribes there are strong Traces (as before hinted) of a lower Kind of Intellect, Knowledge, Memory, Reflection, or, in a Word, of *Thinking* and *Reasoning*. They are affected with the several Objects around them, can compare one Thing with another, and draw Inferences from the Observations they make, and therefore must be possessed of a lower Degree of Reason —

— They also know,

“ And Reason, not contemptibly.” *

But they don't appear at all *capable* of even the least Degree of the Knowledge

* Milt. Par. Lost. b. viii. v. 373.

of God, and his Perfections; of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, or of the Laws and Sanctions of the moral Government of the DEITY; and therefore not capable of Religion and Virtue; cannot perceive moral Truths, or be affected with them; all that has any Appearance of this Kind of Sense in them, respects only that Obedience which they owe to Man, and the Effects of his Approbation or Displeasure. Man possesses far nobler and more exalted Powers and Capacities; is conscious of the Majesty and Authority of the SUPREME BEING, can contemplate his adorable Perfections, understanding his Laws and their Sanctions, and feel their Influence; —Religion and Virtue, therefore, are not only *consonant* to his Nature, but *essentially necessary* to its Happiness. The Conduct of *Brutes* is more generally governed by *Instinct* * than by Reason. But enlightened

* What *Instinct* is, is hard to say; perhaps, the mere Energy of the ALMIGHTY, which diffuses itself through universal Nature, impelling and direct-

Reason,

Reason, and the moral Sense, are the chief governing Powers in *Man* ; and are given him on Purpose to over-rule and direct the strong Propensities of his Instinct, to their proper Ends, and such as become his moral Nature. So far, therefore, as Man lays aside his Reason and moral Feelings, to follow the Dictates of his mere instinctive Propensities; he degrades his Nature and sinks himself down to the level of a Brute ; and so on 'till he becomes, what the Brutes are not capable of becoming—an *incarnate Devil*.

As to the *Essence* of the human Soul, it is beyond the Limits of our Comprehension at present ; the greatest Philosophers, after their utmost Efforts of In-

ing all the Operations of her active Powers, to their *natural* Ends, independent of the Influence of Reason, or—A Kind of vital Stimulus or Propensity to Action, excited by some sudden Impression from external Objects, adapted to the Purpose. *Reason* is not properly our actuating moving Principle, but designed to enable us to understand, and judge of the Subjects before it, and guide our instinctive Faculty in its Operations.

quiry,

quiry, have not been able to tell us, with any Certainty, what it is. It appears, however, to be possessed of divers distinguishable Capacities, Faculties, or Powers; such as *Perception*, or the Capacity of receiving Impressions, Ideas, or Images of Things without us, by the Medium of the bodily Senses; *Reflection*, or the Power of contemplating those Ideas, comparing, separating, multiplying them, &c. *Memory*, or the Power of retaining and recollecting those Ideas, &c. upon various Occasions; the *Will*, or Power of Volition, by which it chuses or refuses what is proposed to it; the Power of *Self-determination*, which, under the Direction of the *Understanding and Judgment*, fixes the Volitions, or determines the Actings of the Will, this Way or that, at Pleasure; and CONSCIENCE, which is a *Monitor* to the Will, and its self-determining Power; and likewise a *Witness*, or that which bears Testimony for or against what is resolved and done, and particularly in *Morals*. All this every Man,

Man, who attends to the Feelings and Operations of his own Mind, finds in himself. Hence it appears, that the human Soul is a vital Principle (at least Capacity) of *intellectual Light* and *moral Feeling*, which by Mediums, adapted by its great *Parent* to the Purpose, *perceives*, *thinks*, *reasons*, *wills*, *determines*, &c. not only about *material* Objects, but *immaterial* also; and of these, about the *moral* as well as *physical* or *natural*. But after all, and even with the Help of divine Revelation, we must remain ignorant, of many Particulars concerning this nobler Part of ourselves, and acknowledge it to be at present, an impenetrable Mystery. But in Truth, there is no more Occasion for a precise philosophical Knowledge of the Essence of our Souls, in order to understand, and properly discharge the Duties of Life, and pursue our true Happiness with Success, than there is for our philosophical Acquaintance with the Powers of *Digestion* and *Nutrition*, in order to the Support of
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our natural Life and Strength; or for the manual Artist to understand the *Anatomical Reasons* or *Causes* of muscular Motion, in order to make a proper Use of his Tools.

I am, &c.

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L E T T E R II.

*Farther Observations on the Mind of Man,
and the Dispensation he is under.*

THE *moral Sense*, of which I have been speaking, as it exists now under the Advantages of divine Revelation, you will observe, my dear Sir, goes by various Names amongst Mankind, such as *Reason, Conscience, moral Instinct, Light and Law of Nature; Grace, CHRIST, the Spirit within us*; just as their various Opinions and Prejudices about Religion happen to dictate. But they all agree there is SOMETHING in every Man that renders him the Subject of *moral Government*, or, which is all one, of *Religion and Virtue*, and that tells him they are necessary to his Happiness. When, therefore I use the Words *Reason, Conscience, or moral Sense, &c.* I mean in general the same Thing, (viz.) that *universal Principle* which enters essentially into the Constitution of the human Nature,

ture, and which is the main Spring or grand Medium the DEITY makes Use of in the Administration of his moral Government amongst us.

I do not pretend to determine, whether this moral Principle, call it by what Name you please, be an *instinctive Principle* only; nor whether the Soul itself be a mere *Blank* (though potential) *Capacity*, deriving all its primary Ideas from without, by some peculiar Emotions of the Nerves or Brain, or medullary Substance excited by external Objects; be these Enquiries answered which way they may, they leave my Argument the same; for either Way a moral Perception and Feeling is allowed; which shews the Necessity and Importance of Religion and Virtue to human Happiness, and that they are perfectly *connatural* to the Mind of Man. The Reader who wishes to look into these Questions may consult the Doctors *Reid, Oswald, Beattie, Hartley, Priestley*. This Principle, however, does not appear to be a mere *blind Instinct*, on the one Hand; or, a mere *mechanical Effect* on the

the other; but a *vital operative moral Light*, essential to our Constitution, and necessary to render us the Subjects of the moral Government of God. Nor have I any Doubt of the Soul's Immortality.

I acknowledge that this Principle, as, indeed, the whole of the Constitution of Man, however perfect in the State of Innocence in which our first Parents were created, is now, in fallen Man, miserably disordered and impaired, and would have been intirely lost to *all that is good*, had it not been for the Mercy of God in his Son; but through him is so far restored to all Mankind, as to render them still properly moral Agents, or Subjects of the moral Government of God. * And because even this Restoration is a Matter of pure unmerited Fa-

* As to the fallen and depraved State of human Nature, not only the sacred Scriptures, but some of the greatest of the Heathen Writers, led by their own Feelings and Observation, allow it; and represent Mankind as deplorably darkened, debilitated, and prone to Vice and Wickedness, against the Light and

vour to fallen Man, is opposed to his corrupt Propensities, and tends to his Happiness, it seems more honourable to the divine Goodness and every Way most reasonable, to call it *Grace* than

Remonstrances of a Principle within. Horace says,
Sat. iii. l. i.

“ Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur, optimus ille est

“ Qui minimis Urgetur.”——

And *Juvenal* very justly observes, as the Consequence of our natural Depravity

“ —— Quoniam Dociles imitandis

“ Turpibus ac pravis omnes sumus ;”——

Sat. XIV.

However, that Mankind are in a State of miserable Degeneracy, with strong Propensities to Vice, is so notorious a *Fact*, that none but a few over refined Speculists in Religion, pretend to deny it. But for all this, (and carry this Depravity ever so far,) it cannot be denied, that there is a very powerful Principle within every Man, as well as a vast Variety of Motives without, to stimulate, and assist his Endeavours after moral Excellence : So that the profligate Libertine who would fain shelter his Wickedness under the Pretence of his moral Impotence, and the Violence of his depraved Appetite, will find at last, that he has miserably imposed on himself.

Nature,

Nature, though an essential Concomitant of it, and an inseparable Ingredient in its present Constitution. And I call it an *universal* Principle, because *all Men*, more or less, discover such Perceptions and Feelings as naturally arise from such a Principle, and which cannot be otherwise rationally accounted for; and because the sacred Writings themselves speak the same Language; for there we read of CHRIST as the *Light which enlighteneth every Man coming into the World*—*of the Grace of God appearing unto all Men—that as Sin hath abounded, so Grace hath much more abounded, and that even the Gentiles have a Law written in their Hearts, for which they are accountable to GOD, the Judge of all.**

* If we may call this universal Principle *Grace*, or the Effect of the undeserved Goodness of GOD through his SON, I should think the vehement Disputes about *Grace, Free-will, Redemption, &c.* which have so long disturbed the Peace of the Church, wounded the Vitals of Christian *Charity*, and given Spirit and Delight to the Infidel, might be easily adjusted between all cool, candid, and truly pious Contenders on both

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By this gracious *Gift*, communicated from the *Father of Lights*, the Reason and Understanding of Man, which would be otherwise totally dark, as to the great Concerns of his Duty and Happiness, is illuminated; and his Conscience, which would otherwise be destitute of all virtuous Feelings, becomes sensible of them; not, indeed, in the same Degree in all, yet so far as is necessary to render them properly the Subjects of God's moral Government.

It should be observed, however, that the moral *Feelings of the Heart*, do not always come up to the *Light of the Understanding*. There are Men of keen penetrating Genius, and of extensive Knowledge, even in Religion and Morals, who, notwithstanding, have very little moral Sensibility; on the contrary,

Sides. This would be the Case, if *plain Scripture* were more reverently, and without Prejudice, attended to, and human Creeds not so implicitly regarded. John i. 9. Rom. v. 20. Tit. ii. 11. Rom. ii. 14, 15. Heb. xii. 23.

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there are some of very weak reasoning Powers, and very low Attainments in speculative Knowledge, whose moral Feelings are very sensible and lively. For though this moral Principle or Capacity, as at first imparted by the DEITY, be in general the same in all Men, yet, *natural Temper, Education, Example, &c.* as they are good or bad, together with the various Occurrences, and Situations in Life, will soon make a very considerable Difference in its Influence and Effects: And where the proper Means of its Cultivation are slighted, the Propensities to Vice incident to all Men in their fallen State, wilfully indulged, in spite of all its Remonstrances and Promptings to the contrary, and God in just Displeasure, withdraws his gracious Assistance, this heavenly Principle has, in many sad Instances, been so weakened and impaired by Degrees, as to leave the wretched Offenders to sink into the Depths of Wickedness, spiritual Blindness, and Stupidity; but where, under the divine Influence, it has been properly

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attended to and cultivated, it has encreased in Strength and Prevalence, so as to raise the Character of the Subjects of it to very high and distinguishing Degrees of moral Excellence; witness the young Man mentioned in the Gospel, of whom it is said, that JESUS *beholding him, loved him*; while in others, through the still more *abounding Grace of GOD*, and the Power of his Word and Spirit, it grows, expands, aspires, and ripens into what the Scriptures call a *new Birth*, a *new Creature*, a *new Man in CHRIST* *

Upon

* Hence it appears, that what is called *Regeneration*, may not consist in an *entirely new* Principle, instantaneously communicated, or infused into the Mind, as some imagine; but is rather this vital Spark itself kindled up into a more large and vigorous Flame by the ALMIGHTY; or, a more abundant Degree of the same heavenly Light thrown upon this universal Principle by the *Spirit of GOD*, accompanied with stronger and more lasting Impressions in favour of Piety and Virtue, and a more lively Taste for the Pleasures they afford: And which, as communicated through the Mediator, may be very properly called a *new Man in Christ*, a *Being born of the Spirit*, &c.

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Upon this *Moral Sense*, all Religion in the Heart of Man is engrafted; and with this all external Revelation of the Mind of God will perfectly harmonize, because they both spring from the same Fountain of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and both tend to the same End, (viz.) to lead Mankind to the Knowledge, Likeness, and Enjoyment of God, as their supreme Felicity.* To this Principle, there-

But be this as it may, the *Effect* is still the same; a new spiritual and eternal Life is then begun in the Soul, a Life peculiar to them who are, indeed, in CHRIST JESUS, as the Apostle expresses it, united to him, and quickened together with him, as their ever-living Head of Holiness and Bliss. A Life, therefore, that must be ascribed to the Power and Grace of God, and not to ourselves, or the Power of Man.

* “Poor, wretched, polluted, as thou art in thy
“outward Nature,” says an ingenious Writer, “thou
“hast within thee a Seed of eternal Life,—a Son
“of the second Adam; a Reconception of the Light
“and Love of God; an Angel near its new Birth.
“To this Seed, this Birth, this Son, this Reconcep-
“tion, this Angel in thy Breast, belongs the Kingdom

therefore, all the Instructions, Exhortations, Warnings, &c. of such a Revela-

“ of Heaven; the pure Elements of Light, Life, and
 “ Love. JESUS CHRIST hath sown in thy Heart,
 “ and in the Hearts of all thy Fellow-Sinners, this
 “ Seed of his heavenly Natue, &c.”

Duche's Discourses, vol. i. p. 204, 205, 207.

These Discourses I have had the Pleasure of per-
 using long since these Papers were written. I cannot in-
 deed agree with the worthy Author in every Thing he
 advances, and he sometimes expresses himself a little
 too much in the Stile of Mysticism; yet he has pretty
 fully expressed my Idea in the above Passage, about a
 seminal Principle of moral and spiritual Life in Man-
 kind. And I will here take the Opportunity to ob-
 serve, that the Scriptures countenance the Idea here
 thrown out of a *seminal Principle of moral and spiri-
 tual Life in all Men*: Our Lord says his Word is
Spirit and Life: And the Apostle Philip ii. 16. calls
 the Gospel the *Word of Life*. Says elsewhere 'tis *quick
 and powerful*. The Psalmist says, *thy Word hath
 quickened me*. Where by the *Word*, we must under-
 stand the whole of divine Revelation, *the Law writ-
 ten in the Heart*, as well as *that written in the Bible*;
 of which Word the *Idea of God* is the very first
 Article and Ground of all the Religion, Virtue, and
 Happiness there is in this World of Man, and this is
 common to all.

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tion are addrested, and by this will be cordially received, however disagreeable they may be to the Conceptions and false Reasonings of our fallen Nature, and however resisted and borne down by them.

To these general Hints I shall speak more particularly in the following Letters; consider them, and don't decide against what I have advanced 'till you have gone through the whole.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R III.

The Necessity of Religion, and its Congruity to the human Mind, further evinced from the Consideration of the moral Perfections of GOD, and his being the moral Governor of the World; and that there are two Principles in Man.

YOU will, my dear Sir, from what has been already said, allow, That Man must certainly be a moral Agent. It is, indeed, a self-evident Truth, and what every Man feels, more or less in his own Heart. From hence then we may infer the *moral Nature* of the DEITY; or that the *supreme Being* is possessed of all moral Excellencies and Perfections; most Wise, Holy, Righteous, Benevolent, &c. *He that formed the Eye, shall not he see? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall not he know?* We find the moral Excellencies

lencies of Truth, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, &c. at least the first Principles of such Excellencies, amongst Men in general, more or less; they must have their Origin somewhere, and where can we rationally suppose it to be, but in the infinitely perfect and self-existing Spirit. And what can be intended by the Communication of them, but (amongst other Things) to exhibit to us a Copy of his own most adorable moral Character? And accordingly this Idea of God, has been universally admitted, as an undoubted, most important, and delightful Truth, in all Ages of the World, a few excentric Geniuses, intoxicated with the Pride of imaginary Wisdom, excepted.

And if there be such a God, he must be the *moral* as well as *natural* Governor of the World. The very Idea of such Perfections in God, and such a Nature and Capacity in Man, necessarily leads us to this Conclusion. And, indeed, without the Belief or Perswasion in our Minds of the Existence of such a DEITY and Government, we could have no Certainty

tainty in any Thing, however interesting or necessary to our Happiness—All around us would be involved in the most horrid mental Darkness and Confusion—No Light to direct our most important Enquiries—No Dependence upon our most rational Conclusions;—but absolute Scepticism, the Sum Total of all our Acquisitions in Knowledge; and the Condition of Man infinitely worse than that of the Beast that perisheth. How shocking the Thought!

But in the Belief of an all-wise, just, and good God, the *moral* as well as natural Governor of the World, we have a most solid and sure Ground to rest upon in all our Enquiries after Happiness, and the Hope of obtaining it.—Something to guide us in every Difficulty, comfort us in every Distress, and to assure us that a right Conduct here, will certainly issue in our eternal Felicity in a future State! How soothing and delightful is such a Belief! How well calculated to preserve the good Order of the World, to animate our Exertions in our
 respective

respective Lines of Duty, inspire us with Patience and Fortitude in the Face of the greatest Dangers, and to enable us to meet even the awful Hour of Death with the most rational Tranquillity ! Who then that has the least Regard for his own Happiness, and that of Society, would not embrace such a Sentiment !

And, if these Things are so, there must be such a Thing as RELIGION : It naturally follows from the Belief of the moral Perfections of God, and the moral Nature of Man. The Fact, however, certainly is, that Mankind in general so sensibly feel themselves under the Government of ONE SUPREME MORAL BEING, of infinite Knowledge, Power, Justice, Goodness, and perceive such a close *Connection* between true Religion and Happiness, that they cannot, without doing Violence to their Natures, entertain a serious Doubt of the Matter : —In a Word, they feel the Necessity and Importance of Religion, and its Suitability to their Condition.

The Nature and Constitution of the
human

human Mind, not only renders it peculiarly capable of the Knowledge of God, and of his Perfections, and of Obedience to his Will, but also of the most exalted Delight in the Consciousness of his Favour, on the one Hand, and of the most exquisite Pain in that of his Displeasure on the other, which shews that it is, in particular, formed for the Duties and Pleasures of Religion;—To see such a Being as Man possessed of Powers capable of answering such high and important Ends as those above hinted, and yet suppose no such Ends designed to be answered by his Existence, is the most irrational and absurd Supposition that can be conceived. While, therefore, there is such a Being as God, and such a Creature as *Man*, there must be Religion;—it is the necessary Result of that Constitution of Things we are under—It is the Language of Reason and Conscience, and the moral Principle inseparable from them; and therefore what these Powers in their due Exercise will always approve, however violently the Corruptions

tions of our Natures may oppose them.—
 Infatuated even to Madness must the
 Wretch be that renounces Religion!—
 He fights against God, and his own
 Conscience, and plunges himself head-
 long into the Gulph of eternal Darkness
 and Misery!

And, indeed, the Necessity and Im-
 portance of Religion is a Matter so
 clear, that not only here and there one
 of a particular Cast of Mind, but Persons
 of all Ranks, Tempers, and Conditions
 of Life, in all Ages of the World, even
 Heathens themselves, have admitted it,
 and the Obligations resulting from it;
 that is, they have acknowledged, and,
 in their ignorant and superstitious Man-
 ner, have worshipped *some Deity*, and per-
 ceived and maintained some Difference
 between Virtue and Vice. And the
 more enlightened and improved in moral
 Sentiment they have been, the more
 clear and explicit they have also been in
 these Acknowledgments; that is, they
 have been, the more sensible of a su-
 preme Power, the Maker and Lord of
 all,

all, and of the Propriety and Necessity of some Worship to be paid to him, and of the moral Purity of Mind, and Rectitude of Conduct, in which the supreme Excellency of Man consists. It is true, the Worship of the Heathens was rather the Effect of *Fear* than of *Love*; their whole Train of Sacrifices, Rights, and Ceremonious breathe the Spirit of Dread of the Vengeance of their Deities; *Love* was out of the Question. It is *only* the Religion of CHRIST that sets the awful Attributes of DEITY in a truly amiable Light; inspires us with supreme Love to him, and leads us to worship him with a real heartfelt Delight in him;—*Their* Songs of Praise, to the Objects of their Worship, were composed in the Stile of servile Flattery rather than affectionate Gratitude: Yet still there was that amongst them which they called Religion, and thought it of Importance to their Happiness, though they mistook its Nature.

To the Truth of these Observations, the religious Ceremonies of all Nations, and the moral Writings of their Philosophers,

sophers, particularly those of *Greece* and *Rome*, bear the clearest Testimonies.*
 “ Whence” (says the learned Dr. Greg. Sharp) “ is it that we read of Altars,
 “ consecrated Groves, and high Places,
 “ from the Beginning of the World,

* Ut porrò firmissimum hoc afferri videtur, cur Deos esse credamus, quòd nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium, tam sit immanis, cujus Mentem non imbu-
 erit Deorum Opinio: Multi de diis prava sentiunt:—
 Omnes tamen esse vim, et naturam divinam arbitran-
 tur. Nec verò id collocutio hominum, aut consensus efficit; non institutis opinio est confirmata, non legi-
 bus. Omni autem in re consensio omnium gentium, lex natura putanda est. *Cic. Tusc. Quest. l. i. sect 13.*

And somewhere in his Book of the *Nature of the Gods*, he says —

Esse Deos, ita perspicum est, ut qui negat, vix eum sanæ mentis existimem. Atque nulla est etiam tam barbara natio, nulla gens tam efferata, cui non infidea hæc persuasio (i. e. Deos esse.) But even these faint Glimmerings about DEITY, are to be ascribed to traditional Revelation rather than to the Power of un-
 assisted Reason, as will, I trust, appear in the Sequel, if not from what has been said in the first Essay.

“ and

“ and still see the Earth covered with
 “ Mosques and Temples, and religious
 “ Edifices, if Religion is not necessarily
 “ Connected with human Nature ?”

And I will add, it is evident from the Heathen Mythology, that Mankind have been always so attached to Religion, that rather than live without *a god*, they would pay divine Honours to a Stock, or a Stone.

It is true some of their leading Men, even their *Priests themselves*, made a Jest of Religion; and no Wonder, considering that what they called by that dignified Name was, in Reality, but a miserable superstitious Pretence to it; and used only as a political Engine. *Julius Cæsar* was an *High Priest*, and yet an absolute Atheist. — Such, we are told, have been too many of the Popes, and Cardinals amongst Christians; and it is to be feared there are not a few of this Stamp amongst the Pretenders to Knowledge even in this enlightened Country, where Religion appears in her brighter Glories,

ries, who are, therefore, every Way inexcusable ; but notwithstanding all this, we shall find a candid Examination into the Matter will turn out in favour of true and genuine Religion, though to the Confusion of the false Pretences to it ; and that the Rejection of the true is never owing to any *rational Conviction* of its Absurdity or Incongruity to our Natures, but to the Depravity of their Hearts who treat it in that Manner.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that where the Consistency and Importance of Religion have been even sincerely professed, the general Practice has not come up to the Profession ; and sometimes both Principle and Practice have been shockingly corrupted ; but this was not the Fault of Religion, or its Want of Excellencies to recommend it, or Motives to induce them to practise it, but the vicious Depravity of their Natures wilfully indulged against better Light.

“ But

" But ah ! how oft my lawless Passions rove,
 " And break those awful Precepts I approve ?
 " Pursue the fatal Impulse I abhor,
 " And violate the Virtue I adore." *

Reason and *Conscience* under the Influence of the moral Sense or Light of CHRIST in them, are always on the Side of Religion and Virtue ; and it is because Mankind wilfully give up themselves to the depraved Propensities of their lower Powers in Opposition to this better Principle, that they fall into Vice and Wickedness, as they do.

There have been, indeed, some atheistical Philosophers in every Age who affected to deny the Existence of a DEITY, at least his moral Perfections and Government, and consequently have renounced all Pretences to *Religion*, and laughed at the Idea of its Existence, but

* Mrs Carter. So Ovid. Met. l. vii.

" Sed trahit invitam nova vis ; aliudque Cupido,
 " Mens aliud suadet. Video meliora, proboque ;
 " Deteriora sequor."

they

they were always so few, and their Party so small comparatively, that they scarcely deserve to be mentioned even by way of Exception to what I have hinted, as the general Sentiment. The Bulk of Mankind, depraved as they are, and all the most sober and sensible amongst the Philosophers, of all Ages and all Nations, acknowledge the Necessity of Religion; which could not have been the Case, were it not particularly adapted to the human Mind, and were not something fixed there by the Hand of God, correspondent to those general and leading Principles of it, which are taught us by divine Revelation. For Instance,

A Reverence for Truth is natural to all Men; they all find something in them, that leads them to esteem and regard it; there is not a Deceiver, therefore, who does not pretend to it. He makes Use of Falsehood only because he thinks it will serve his Purpose better, but he will endeavour to conceal it under the Mask of Truth, and hold up thta Appéarance

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of it to their Eye on whom he means to impose, as the most likely and necessary Measure to secure Success. Thus all false Religions are founded on Pretensions to Truth, and propagated under the Semblance of it; which shew's, beyond all rational Contradiction, that there is a moral Principle in Man; and that it is an universal Principle;—and then nothing can be clearer than that Religion is agreeable to this Principle, and naturally cherishes, strengthens, and supports it.

Superstition, indeed, which is most Predominant in the World (I wish I could except the Christian World) is not RELIGION, it is only the false Appearance, and corrupt Substitute of it:—it is Religion debased by designing *Priests*, and ignorant Mobs: But though Vice and Folly may lead Men to prefer *Superstition* to RELIGION; yet even this is an Acknowledgment of the Consonancy of the latter to the human Mind, and shews how impossible it is for us to live without something that bears that venerable Name.

The

The Sceptical Pretender to superior Wisdom will object, and to favour his Objections, and make the most of them, will dwell and flourish away upon the little Circumstances that float on the Surface of Religion, or what concerns only its mere Modes and Forms, or the Folly and Mistakes of its weaker Friends. This is his principal Fort. But let us go to the Bottom of the Business, let us take human Nature as it is, and as we find it by Experience and Observation; and let us at the same Time take a View of the leading essential Principles of Religion, and we shall at once perceive the Suitability of those Principles to our Nature as rational, dependent, guilty, and miserable Creatures—perceive something within us disposing us to embrace them, in our Judgment at least, as indispensibly necessary to our Happiness. We are formed by the Hand of our Maker, to receive the Impressions these Principles are adapted to make, as naturally as warm Wax is adapted to receive the Impression of the Seal that is applied

plied to it. Corrupt and vicious Passions will, indeed, oppose; but Reason and Conscience, blinded and weakened as they are, will, so far as they are under the Influence of moral Light within, most certainly cleave to them. Hence very often, even wicked Men feel in themselves a secret Approbation of those very Principles of Piety and Virtue, they contradict in their Practice, and ridicule in their Discourses.

This Truth is finely illustrated by the Apostle *Paul* in the seventh Chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*, where he describes the Nature and Operations of this Principle of *moral* Sense, and its Efforts against the lower Powers of corrupted Nature, the one *approving*, the other *opposing*, the Law of God. And, indeed, nothing is more evident than that there are now in every Man two Principles equally constitutional; the one renders him capable of perceiving the Reasons and Motives of Religion and Virtue, and prompts and stimulates him to the Practice of both;—the other darkens his Understanding,

derstanding, corrupts his Heart, enflames his Passions, and prompts him to Impiety and Vice. These two opposite Principles the Apostle calls *Spirit* and *Flesh*. The one a *Law in his Mind*, the other a *Law in his Members*, i. e. his bodily Powers : This is the Case, in a certain Degree, of all Men, and therefore not only the Christian *Apostle*, but even the Heathen *Philosopher* tells us, that when he *would do Good, Evil was present with him.* * And it is as the one or the other of these Principles prevail and take the lead, that a Man is denominated good or bad, righteous or wicked ; and hence, in this present State of Probation, there is in the best of Men something morally bad ; and in the worst something morally good ;—It is only in the next World their Characters will be perfectly the one or the other. Much to this Purpose is the Reply which *Araſpes*, a young Nobleman of *Media*, made

* *Epiſtetus* who was cotemporary with the Apostle *Paul*. B. ii. ch. 24. Sect. 2.

to King *Cyrus*, reproving him for his dishonourable Treatment of the beautiful Queen *Panthæa* committed to his Charge,—“Now,” says he, “I perceive clearly, that I have *two Souls*; under the Influence of the good one, I do what is good; but under the Influence of the bad, that which is evil.” *

Some, indeed, suppose the Apostle in that Chapter speaks of himself, as a Man renewed by the Grace of God; particularly, because he says *he delights in the Law of God* after the inward Man; and that the *carnal Mind is Enmity against God*, meaning the Mind still unrenewed by that Grace:—But it may be urged against this Opinion—That by the *carnal Mind*, the Apostle evidently means the corrupt *Principle*, or vicious Propensities of our fallen Nature, which take their Rise from and dwell in the *Body*, and which therefore he calls *Flesh*; but it does not follow because there is such a Principle in Man, that

* Xenoph. Cyr. pæd. l. v. c. i. & l. vi. c. i.

he has no other ; for nothing is more evident than that every Man has another Principle in him, of quite a contrary Nature and Tendency, as above hinted ; otherwise there could be no such Thing as Remorse and Shame, and Self-Condernnation, which, however, we find even in very wicked Men. Mankind are also, in some Degree, capable of *delighting in the Law of God* :—Witness the Pleasure which they in general feel, when they do any Thing morally good, or hear of its being done by others : This Sensation shews to a Demonstration, that their *Reason* and *Conscience* approve of the Law of God, *as holy, just, and good*. We may therefore conclude, that the Apostle does not here speak of himself as a Man under the Power of renewing Grace, or one quickened together with CHRIST ; but merely as a Man possessed of the common Principle of moral Sense, though under some particular Conviction of his Condition as a Sinner ; or when, as he expresses it, *the Commandment came, Sin revived and he died* ; i. e. he

he saw his Guilt and moral Weakness as he never saw it before. And this appears very clearly to be the Case, from those very strong Expressions—I AM SOLD UNDER SIN—I *see a Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, bringing me into CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.* Expressions by no Means agreeing with the Character of a truly good Man, or one *born of God*; for of all such he says THEY ARE NOT THE SERVANTS OF SIN; SIN HAS NOT DOMINION OVER THEM, they are FREED FROM SIN. Language quite the reverse of the other. And accordingly in the next Chapter, where he speaks of himself as a renewed Man, he tells us that *the Spirit of Life in CHRIST JESUS had FREED him from the Law of Sin and Death.* And this Sense, indeed, agrees with the Scope of the Apostle's Argument in the sixth, seventh, and eighth Chapters of this Epistle, which is to shew the great Weakness of this Principle of moral Light and Feeling common to all Men; and the
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the infinitely superior Excellency of that more abundant and powerful Grace revealed in the present Dispensation of the Gospel.

Impiety and Vice, though so very common and prevalent, have never yet received the Sanction of general Approbation, have been no where openly and professedly taught, or countenanced by public Authority, in any Part of the World. But why not? Certainly because the Reason and Conscience of Mankind in general would protest against such a Measure, however powerfully their corrupt Appetites might plead for it.—Suppose it were publickly advertised, that at such a Place—“ an Academy was opened
 “ where Youth are carefully instructed
 “ in all the Doctrines of Infidelity and
 “ Atheism; and the various Arts of
 “ Vice and Wickedness;—the utmost
 “ Pains taken to eradicate from their
 “ Minds all Prejudices in favour of Religion and Virtue, the Fear of God
 “ and a future State, and all Regard to
 “ the Duties of Life upon Principles of
 “ Con-

“ Conscience ; and every Principle of a
 “ contrary Tendency most strenuously
 “ inculcated.” Suppose this—Where
 is the People under Heaven, who would
 not feel their Resentment kindled at
 the very Proposal, and who would’ not
 use every Means and exert every Ef-
 fort in their Power to prevent its being
 carried into Execution, were there any
 Individual amongst them fool-hardy
 enough to attempt it ? And why ?
 But because Atheism and Vice are Ab-
 horrent to the constitutional Principles
 of the human Mind, * and destructive of
 human

* *Hazael’s* Reply to the Prophet who told him
 what a wicked Part he would soon act, shews how
 abhorrent Vice is to the Heart of Man, even in his
 fallen State—“ Am I,” says he, “ a Dog that I
 “ should do this Thing ?” His very Soul revolted
 at the Suggestion, while he viewed it with unpre-
 judiced Judgment ; and yet when worked up by the
 Lust of Dominion and Revenge, he did the very
 Thing he just before so very cordially abhorred. And,
 indeed, the Care wicked Men take to conceal their
 Vices from the public Eye, and even to deceive them-
 selves into the Practice of them, shews how *unnatural*
 it is, i. e. how contrary to their moral Feelings in
 general,

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human Society and Happiness :—In short, the Man would be deemed a Monster, yea a Devil in human Shape, who should even seriously propose such an Establishment. So connatural is Religion and Virtue to the Mind of Man !

general, however agreeable to their corrupt Passions ; and proves, beyond all reasonable Contradiction, that there are, in Fact, two Principles in every Man—The one prompting him to Vice, the other condemning him for it, and prompting him to Virtue.

I am, &c.

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L E T T E R IV.

Objections against Religion's being connatural to Man answered, and the Truth farther illustrated.

YOU will perhaps, my dear Friend, be ready to say,—“If Religion
 “and Virtue are so *connatural* to Man,
 “and the very Seeds of it sown in the
 “human Mind, as asserted above,
 “whence is it that there is so much Im-
 “morality and Prophaneness in the
 “World? Do not we see Mankind
 “universally going astray, almost as
 “soon as they are born, in the Paths
 “of Impiety and Wickedness; and the
 “Bulk of them treating every Thing
 “serious with the utmost Neglect, if
 “not with Contempt and Ridicule?
 “And amongst those who pretend to
 “Religion, how many content them-
 “selves

“ selves with the mere empty Form of
 “ it, and often break out into a mad and
 “ furious Zeal about that Form; re-
 “ viling and persecuting with the greatest
 “ Cruelty, such as happen to differ from
 “ them and refuse to submit to their Im-
 “ positions? and whence is it that so
 “ many, who enjoy the clear Light of
 “ divine Revelation, shew such an in-
 “ veterate Hatred to Religion, laugh at
 “ all Pretences to it, as mere Cant and
 “ Hypocrisy, and even deny its real Ex-
 “ istence, as irrational and absurd, say-
 “ ing *in their Hearts*, at least, *there is*
 “ *no* God? Whence is all this, if Re-
 “ ligion be so congruous to the human
 “ Nature as you say it is? And you
 “ must acknowledge these Things are
 “ Matters of Fact, not only amongst the
 “ illiterate and unthinking Vulgar, but
 “ also amongst too many who make the
 “ highest Pretences to Honour and
 “ Politeness, yea, even to Philosophy.
 “ Whence is all this, and where are the
 “ Traces of that natural Force of Reli-
 “ gion,

“ gion, and its Consonancy to the human Mind you talk of?”

Granting all that this Objection asserts in its utmost Extent, what does it prove? only that the human Nature is deplorably corrupted;—That this Corruption, is the strongest and governing Power in these Instances;—and that Atheism and Wickedness flow as naturally from it as Water from its Fountain; I say, granting all this; yet it is nevertheless true, that every Man feels something else within him, that as naturally opposes, and remonstrates against these corrupt Propensities, in Proportion to his Light and Sensibility, witness the painful Remorse the most Vicious often feel in the Moment of cool Reflection; and who from the Consciousness of their Guilt, and its tormenting Consequences, are compelled to acknowledge that they have, by these vicious Indulgencies, violated the first Principles of their Nature, as reasonable and moral Beings: Principles, the Existence of which however

ever they may affect to deny or oppose their Influence, will, sometimes, rise up with vital Power in their Hearts and plead there the important Cause of Religion and Virtue, with an Authority they cannot refute, attended with Terrors they are not able to bear.

And when we consider, that these moral Powers in Man, move gently, and speak, as I may say, with a still small Voice; while the corrupt Passions, especially when roused by Temptation, are impetuous and violent, and carry all before them, we shall not wonder that Men are so frequently and generally led into vicious Courses. Nothing but the more abundant Power of renewing Grace, can effectually restore the just Balance of the Mind, and give the divine Principle within them its governing Ascendency. And, blessed be God, this Grace is *freely* promised to ALL that diligently and sincerely seek it.—

However, it is certain all Mankind agree in acknowledging, one Way or other,

other, either voluntarily or by Force,* that there is such a Principle in them. Call it *natural Conscience* if you please; yet, so far as it prompts them to Virtue, and restrains from Vice, it is a Token of the divine Goodness and Mercy; and, as undeserved by them, must be Matter of free Favour through *Jesus Christ*; and therefore I call it GRACE. The Influence of this Principle is well described in the following Lines:—

“ Look back!—A Thought which borders on Despair,
 “ Which human Nature *must*, but *cannot*, bear.
 “ ’Tis not the Babbling of a busy World,
 “ Where Praise and Censure is at random hurl’d,
 “ Which can the meanest of my Thoughts controul,
 “ Or shake one settl’d Purpose of my Soul;

* *Tiberius*, the Roman Emperor, was a most daring Monster of Wickedness; yet, though an Heathen, found a living Principle in him, a Source of insupportable Torment.—“TIBERIUS” (says *Tacitus*) “*non Fortuna, non Solitudines protegebant, quin Tormenta Pectoris suasque pœnas fateretur.*” And when St. Paul reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to come, *Felix*, another vicious Heathen, trembled.

“ Free

- “ Free and at large, might their bold Censures roam,
 “ If all—if all, alas ! were well at home.
 “ No—’tis the Tale which angry CONSCIENCE tells,
 “ When she with more than tragic Horror swells—
 “ Each Circumstance of Guilt, when stern, but true,
 “ She brings bad Actions forth into Review ;
 “ And, like the dread Hand-writing on the Wall,
 “ Bids late Remorse awake, at *Reason*’s Call,
 “ Arm’d at all Points, bids Scorpion Vengeance pass ;
 “ And to the Mind holds up Reflection’s Glass ;
 “ The Mind, which starting, heaves the Heart—
 “ felt Groan,
 “ And hates the Form she knows to be her own.”

Churchill’s Conference.

Though enlightened Reason and Conscience may be borne down, and overpowered for a Time by the Violence of corrupt Appetite, false Philosophy, and Self-will, they can NEVER BE DESTROYED. And while these Powers remain, as they ever must, they will testify that there is a God, the moral Governor of Man—that he is to be feared, and loved, and honoured above all ; that it is only in a dutiful Regard to His Will, that we can justly expect real Happiness ;—and that a Course of Impiety and Vice must,

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first or last, be attended with Misery and Ruin.

“ Monstro quod ipse tibi posse dare—semita certè

“ Tranquillæ per Virtutem, patet unica Vitæ,” *

Ask even the most spirited and daring Worker of Iniquity, when cool, and his Reason in Exercise, whether he can say from his Heart, that he resolves absolutely to live and die in an avowed Course of Wickedness, and set at Defiance the Power and Justice of the Almighty? It is scarcely possible that he would, or could, answer in the Affirmative. The Instances of such monstrous Impiety, however, are very rare, even amongst the most vicious Tribes of Men; which strongly evinces the natural Agreeableness of Religion and Virtue to the inward Sentiments and moral Feelings of the human Mind; and that there are certain Principles immoveably fixed in its very Constitution, as the Basis of

* Juven. Sat. x. 363.

its Happiness or Misery, according as they are, or are not regarded; or, as the Apostle expresses it, that there is a *Law written in the Heart*, in indelible Characters, by the Finger of God. Had not this been the Case, the Instances of notorious Impiety would have been not only more numerous, but more constant and daring than they now are; —The Practice of Wickedness is so agreeable to the corrupted Powers of our fallen Nature, that were there not something in us of a contrary Tendency, and this so deeply rooted, and operative, as never to be entirely destroyed, the World would have been indeed deluged in Vice and Prophaneness.

As to those who, while they pretend to Religion themselves, discover such Aversion to it in others who differ from them, as to persecute them with Cruelty; they act in this Manner, either because they consider the superior Piety and Virtue of these Dissentients as reflecting upon their own Deficiency in both; or, because they make themselves

believe, that it is only the false Appearance of Religion, or some heretical and dangerous Opinion, that they direct their Resentments against, and not Religion itself. They are angry, not because their Neighbours believe in and worship God, but because they don't do it in the Forms they have been used to venerate as sacred. Were they to make such Opposition avowedly to Religion itself, their own Hearts would condemn them for it, upon the least serious Reflection. One can scarcely believe, that any Set of Men, in a civilized Country, were ever carried to a greater Pitch of deliberate Wickedness and Impiety, than were the Persecutors of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, amongst the Jews; yet they did not consider, either their Principles or Conduct as immoral, but on the contrary, as the Effect of a pious Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Support of true Religion—That is, they did not *professedly* persecute him for his Righteousness and Goodness; but under the Idea of his being a Sabbath-breaker and

an Enemy to their Laws and their Country—Had they not deceived themselves, by such Impositions upon their Understandings and Consciences, they could not have acted the Part they did ; which shews, with abundant Evidence that there really is a vital Principle in the Breast of every Man that favours the Cause of Piety and Righteousness ; and that it is not, 'till they find some Way to elude the Light and Force of this Principle, that they can be professedly wicked. The more closely and accurately we search into the Constitution of human Nature, and the Conduct and Feelings of Mankind, the more clearly we shall perceive the Truth of what I am advancing ; and, that there is in all Men a Principle that distinguishes them as the Subjects of God's moral Government in this World, and will prove a *Savor of Life unto Life, or of Death unto Death* in the World to come.

As to the trite Objections of the Atheistical Tribe—" That Religion is all a
 " mere Imposition upon the Weakness
 " and Credulity of Mankind ; a solemn
 " Trick

“ Trick of selfish Priests, and Politicians, to keep the World in Subjection to their Pride and Avarice; or, the natural Effect of gross Ignorance, and irrational Fears, &c.”—The evident Absurdity of the Objections themselves, their pernicious Tendency, together with the *Characters* of those who make them, are a sufficient Confutation of them. These Men, however, ought to give us very clear Proofs of their superior Wisdom, and Benevolence, before they presume to set up their Opinions in Opposition to the most natural Notions and Feelings of the human Mind, in Points so apparently essential to its Happiness, supported by the Common Sense and universal Suffrage of the World; and that have stood the Test of the severest Scrutiny for more than five thousand Years. They ought to demonstrate beyond all rational Contradiction and Doubt—That there is no God, the moral Governor of the World,—That *Man* is not a rational Being capable of the moral Government of
 God,

God, and that there cannot *possibly* be any future State of Rewards and Punishments—I say, they ought to demonstrate all this, with indisputable Clearness and Certainty, before they can justly expect any serious Regard to be paid to their Dogmas; or, that we should give up Notions so firmly implanted in our Nature, and of such experienced Consequence to our Felicity, as those on which Religion is founded. But this Demonstration, we are sure, is utterly impossible. They may themselves, indeed, have sacrificed Certainty to Doubt; Reason and Conscience to Impiety and worldly Lust; their moral Feelings to the Gratification of depraved Appetite; but, thank God, bad as human Nature is, there is no great Danger of universal Atheism.

I have just now met with one of these sceptical Pretenders to Wisdom who roundly asserted—“That Conscience was
 “ nothing, but a Disorder of Nature, a
 “ diseased Tendernefs of the nervous
 “ System, which, by the idle and superstitious Tales of Nurses and Priests,
 “ is

“ is transmitted to the Mind, and affects it with Fears about invisible Powers and Consequences, which we dread merely because we are ignorant of them.”

In Answer to this it is sufficient to observe, that these Philosophers themselves, with all their superior Wisdom and *Firmness of Nerves*, which they have acquired by the Exercise of it, cannot entirely get rid of this Disorder of Nature; and, if they could, would not be at all the better Members of the Community, nor happier in themselves, than those who own it, and act agreeable to its Dictates, under the Influence of *enlightened Reason* and the BIBLE; and, that as to the Bulk of Mankind, were they prevailed upon to lay aside this *diseased Tendernefs* of Nature, the wild Beasts of the Forest would be more tolerable to Society. * Besides, after all, we must take

* “ Atque haud Scio, an pietate adversus Deos sublata,
“ Fides etiam, et Societas humani generis, et una
“ Excellentissima Virtus Justitia, tollatur.”

Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. i. sec. 4.

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take Things as they *really* are, for as they *really* are, they will operate, and the Effects of their Operations follow accordingly, mauger all the Power of false Philosophy. No sophistical Reasonings about the Qualities of Fire, and the Nature of Sensation in the human Frame, could perswade a Man whose Common Sense was not quite lost, that he felt nothing while his Hand was held

Were Atheism to prevail, all the most sacred Bonds of Society would be dissolved, nor could there be any Principle, but the treacherous one of Self-Interest, or the present momentary Gratification of the basest of Passions, to influence the Conduct of Mankind, or afford any Ground for that mutual Confidence which is so essential to the Welfare of Society. Even the most solemn Oaths would have no Power over the Minds of such Men.—They would swear any Thing and mean nothing.

“ Sunt qui in Fortunæ jam Cassibus omnia ponant,
 “ Et nullo credant mundum rectore moveri,
 “ Natura volvente vices et lucis et anni,
 “ Atque ideo intrepidi quæcumque altaria tangunt.”

Juvenal, Sat. xiii. v. 86.

upon

upon burning Coals. Nor can any Man knowingly violate the Laws of Religion and Virtue, but the *Something* within him, call it what you please, will be painfully affected, unless disordered and stupified to a most unnatural Degree indeed. And if Man be thus constituted can any Metaphysical Reasonings about his Constitution make it otherwise?

I am, &c.

P. S. Long after the above Letter was written, the public Attention was called to a *boastful* Account of the Calmness and Composure with which the celebrated Sceptic (*Hume*) departed this Life; in which we are told, that he avowed his atheistical Principles to the last Moment, and died as serenely and cheerfully as the best Christian could do, to the

the immortal Honour of the *blessed* Cause of Infidelity. Now, supposing this was really a Fact, which, however, as to the fine Composure of his Mind in the Article of Death, may be questioned, but supposing this, what does it prove? Only that it is possible for a Man, who had confounded his great reasoning Powers (for such it must be acknowledged they were) with Doubts upon Doubts, 'till he questioned, sometimes at least, the *Reality* even of his own Existence, that it is possible for such a Man to die under the stupifying Power of that Confusion, questioning whether Death itself was any Thing more than a Dream.—And where is the Wonder, that one who had so long abused the leading Powers of his Nature, and lost all their Influence over him, through the enchanting Pride of false Philosophy, should be given up of God, and suffer to persist in the pleasing Delusions of his own Heart to the last Moment of his Life.—

Besides, let the Behaviour of this Man in the Approaches of Death, be compared

pared with that of any truly serious, conscientious, rational Christian, and we shall perceive an amazing Difference; — *Here* all is clear, manly, solemn, and every Way becoming the awful Exit, from this Stage of Life; — *There*, all the very reverse, light, vain, and childishly trifling! And after all, this is but a rare Instance of sceptical Heroism, against vast Numbers of the contrary Kind. — Where there is one Infidel that dies avowing his Principles with the *Appearance* of Composure, a Composure derived only from the *poor Hope* of sinking into nothing, there are Thousands of Christians that die in the transporting yet *Solid* and rational *Affurance* of rising up to an immortal Life of unutterable Felicity and Glory! And whence this Difference? Certainly because the former dies under the Influence of the most unnatural Self-deception; and the latter under that of a truly enlightened Reason, and the divine Religion of Jesus.

N. B. Long since the above Postscript was written, was published a small Tract, entitled, *A Letter to Dr. Adam Smith, on the Life, Death, and Philosophy of his Friend David Hume, Esq.* By one of the People called Christians. Where the Reader will find many excellent Remarks to the same Purpose as the above.

L E T T E R V.

That true Religion is not the Effect of the Human Reason, but of divine Revelation and Grace.

RELIGION you know, my dear Sir, has been usually distinguished by the Terms *natural* and *revealed*; tho', I think, without sufficient Reason. All true Religion may be called *natural* as being adapted to the Nature of Man; and upon a fair Examination, *all* true Religion will appear to be Matter of *divine Revelation*, and that this has always been the Religion of Mankind, where there has been any true Religion at all.

As to what is commonly called *the Religion of Nature*, if thereby be intended the right Knowledge and Worship of the ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD, taught merely by the *Light of Man's natural Reason*;

Reason; assisted by the Consideration of the Works of Creation and Providence, entirely independent of all special Assistance from the DEITY, it may be justly questioned whether there ever was, in Fact, any such Thing. It is granted that Man is, by Constitution, a rational Being, endued with a Principle of moral Light and Feeling, and thereby capacitated for receiving the Knowledge of God, and his Worship; or the first Principles of Piety and Virtue, and the Reasons and Motives enforcing a proper Regard to them. It is granted also that the Works of God are in a peculiar Manner, adapted to evince the Being and Perfections of God; but then we have no Evidence that Mankind were ever left entirely to these Mediums of religious Knowledge, without any other Assistance. * And does not the Apostle intimate

* "Reason," says a pious and learned Writer, is
 "not the first and only Revelation from God, for it
 "is, properly speaking, no Revelation at all. Man,
 "at

intimate as much, where he says, that the *natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit*—i. e. the Man, who is governed by his depraved Appetites, or depends entirely upon his mere natural Powers, without divine Revelation, is not capable of perceiving or relishing any Thing so spiritual, as the very first Principles of Religion must be. *

It has been usually concluded from the Words of the Apostle, in the first Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that

“ at his first Creation, was not left, so much as a
 “ single Day, to Reason. It is the *Eye* not the
 “ *Light*: It can, with Certainty, know nothing,
 “ concerning the Things of another World, but by
 “ Information from thence.”

This Observation, which I met with in my reading long since these Papers were written, corroborates the Doctrine inculcated in them.

See Letters on Infidelity, p. 298.

* The main Design of the Apostle here, 1 Cor. ii. 13, 14. is to shew that the wisest of Men, without special or supernatural Revelation, could not understand spiritual Things in their spiritual Meaning.

Man-

Mankind might attain the Knowledge of God, and their Obligations to worship him, merely by the Light of natural Reason, assisted by a due Contemplation of the Works of God. In Answer to this, I would here observe, that the Words (*ὁ γὰρ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσε* i. e.) *for God hath shewn it unto them*, upon which the Apostle lays the whole Strefs of his Argument, must be understood of supernatural Revelation, or that *Gospel* wherein the *Righteousness of God was revealed from Faith to Faith; the TRUTH which they held in Unrighteousness.** And thus what the Apostle adds in the next Verse, is just as if he had said,—“ The Creation itself, with all the visible Effects of Omnipotence therein displayed, perfectly agrees with the more special and extraordinary Discoveries of the Existence of one invisible God, which he is pleased to make more im-

* Rom. i. 16.—21. See Essay 1.

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“ mediately

“ mediately to the Minds of Mën ; and
 “ both unite in declaring the same ge-
 “ neral Truths to all Men, even that he
 “ is the Maker and Lord of all, and has
 “ therefore a just Claim to their supreme
 “ Love, Adoration, and Praise.”

The reasoning Faculties of our first
 Parents, in the State of Innocence, we
 will suppose to have been much clearer
 and stronger than they were after their
 Transgression, at least, as to the Con-
 cerns of Religion ; and yet it is scarcely
 supposable that they were even then left
 to themselves to find out the Nature and
 Perfections of the DEITY, and what
 kind of Worship he required of them,
 by the Strength of their merely natural
 Reason exercised upon his Works ; or
 that even their Religion was the Reli-
 gion of their own Nature, self-taught
 and self-supported. We should rather
 conclude, that as GOD had brought them
 into Existence, and was properly, and
 most emphatically their FATHER, he
 would, of his paternal Goodness, deign

to

to correspond with them * in a Way worthy of himself, and suited to their Condition,

* The late pious and learned Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. *Secker*) in his posthumous Sermons (Vol. I. Sermon. xi. p. 259.) observes, agreeable to what is here advanced——“ That our first Parents
“ were instructed by their Creator. Had they not,
“ how quick soever the Improvements of self-taught
“ Philosophy may be, when described from Imagination; yet Reason and Fact make it highly probable, that even had they continued innocent,
“ they would have been very ignorant for a considerable Time. But the Entrance of Sin must enfeeble their Understandings greatly; and had their
“ Knowledge of what they were to *do*, been ever so clear, yet what they were to *expect*, and on what
“ Terms when they had failed of doing it, must be so very obscure, that it was of the utmost Consequence for God to interpose, and inform them, as
“ we find in Scripture he did, by the immediate Notification of a Redeemer. Divine Instruction,
“ therefore, began Religion, and human has preserved it.”

The Thoughts in the above Quotation are so similar to those in these Letters, though better expressed, that the Reader may imagine they were borrowed from it, could I not, with the greatest Truth, assure

dition, and discover to them such Truths, as were necessary to form their Minds to the Practice of Religion and Virtue; and enable them to make a proper Use of the Powers he had given them for that Purpose.

Now if our first Parents, even in their State of Innocence, were not left to the Light of their own Reason in the great Affair of Religion, it is still far more improbable, they should be so left after their Fall into Sin, if God intended to shew them Mercy, as it is certain he did; for then their Understandings were become dark indeed, their Hearts alienated from the Life of God, and all their Powers miserably depraved: They must, therefore, now more than ever, stand in Need of divine Instruction, in order to the

him of the contrary, and that I had never seen this Passage 'till many Years after these Essays were written. It is, however, no small Satisfaction to find so great and good a Man in the same Way of thinking upon this Subject,

right

right Knowledge of their Duty, and how to perform it acceptably. They had now violated the Dispensation they were under, and were involved in moral Pollution, Guilt and Ruin : Their Deliverance, therefore, must be the Effect of some new Dispensation, such as infinite Wisdom alone could contrive, and infinite Power alone could carry into Execution.

—That is, the System of Religion, which was proper for fallen Man, must be very different from that which he enjoyed in his innocent State ;—must take into it many new Articles of Faith and Practice adapted to his Condition, and calculated to raise him from a depraved and sensual, to an holy and spiritual Life ;—a System founded not only on the divine *Authority*, but on the divine *Mercy* also ; and which must necessarily include in it, on Man's Part, the great Duties of *Repentance* and *Faith*, in Order to the Pardon of his Sins and the Acceptance of his imperfect though *sincere Obedience* through the Mediator.—And on the Part of God, and as the Means and Motive of
Man's

Man's Repentance, Faith, and Obedience, an exprefs Declaration and Grant of Forgiveness and Acceptance, together with proper Rules for his Conduct, and explicit Promises of all necessary Assistance and Success:—In a Word, a System of Religion that should exhibit a new Character of the DEITY, and set his Perfections in a new Light—shew him to be, indeed, *both a just God and a Saviour*. This is what the Condition of sinful Man, and the Reason and Nature of Things evidently requires, in Order to his Happiness.

But such a Plan of Religion as this cannot be rationally supposed, to be in the Power of human Reason even to guess at, much less actually produce;—be the natural Powers of Man what they may, and supposing (not granting) that here and there one of more extraordinary Genius and Improvements, should, by the diligent Use of his Powers, be able to argue himself into the Belief of one supreme intelligent first Cause, and perceive some general Traces

or

or Outlines of moral Obligation, or the Law of Nature — supposing this — yet after all, if left entirely to himself, without any extraordinary Assistance from Heaven, he could not possibly conceive how, or in what Manner he, a guilty polluted Creature, should *come before the most high God*, worship him acceptably, and be assured of Pardon and everlasting Life. And if this be the Case of the wiser Few, what must become of the Bulk of Mankind who are all equally interested in this Business? But the Fact really is, there never was an Instance of any such Acquisition made by any Man. All that the wiser Heathens knew or practised aright in Religion, was owing, not to their own natural Sagacity, but to traditionary Revelation, or extraordinary Instruction communicated from God himself.

The Assertors of the Sufficiency of mere natural Light, for the Purposes of Religion and Happiness, if genuine Theists, will allow that God is infinitely good and merciful; — that he has a particular

ticular Regard for Mankind, and that he provides for the temporal Support of their Bodies, and their several Connections in this Life;—Now, is it at all likely, that amidst all the Abundance of his Goodness in these Cases, he should pay so little Regard to their immortal Interest, and the particular Services they owe more immediately to himself, as to leave them to grope their Way to their Duty and Happiness by the dim Light and feeble Powers of Nature? The History of Mankind, however, both sacred and profane, the former especially, is one continued Illustration of the Necessity of divine Revelation in this Case, over and above the moral Powers implanted in their Nature, and of the extraordinary Steps the DEITY has been pleased to take, in Order to teach them how to worship him in the most acceptable Manner, and to encourage and support them in the Discharge of their Duty against the many Temptations they would meet with to the contrary. Thus we may safely conclude that, however
 sup-

supposable, what is called *natural Religion* may be, there never was in Reality any such Thing in our World; and that the Religion of CHRIST, is as natural, that is, as agreeable to our Nature, as the Religion commonly so called, is supposed to be, and, considering our present Condition, much more so.—But more of this hereafter.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R VI.

That true Religion is Matter of divine Revelation, farther considered, from the Institution of Sacrifices, &c.

DEAR SIR,

WHAT very much confirms the Doctrine I have been inculcating is, the Notion that Mankind in all Ages have so generally entertained of the Necessity and Efficacy of SACRIFICES, in Order to their acceptable Approach to the DEITY; and in that Way expecting the Forgiveness of their Sins, and the Enjoyment of his Favour. This has ever been a leading Article in the Religion, not only of Heathens, but of Jews and Christians, as their several Histories abundantly

abundantly testify. * The *Universality* of this Idea shews, that it must spring from some common Source, yet certainly not from the mere Light of Nature in Man, because there is no Principle within the Reach of it which could lead to such a Notion; and because, viewed in that Light ONLY it appears absurd and shocking; and therefore from the Days of *Cain* to the present, has been strongly opposed by

* We are told, indeed, by Travellers, that there are some considerable Bodies of People in the remoter Parts of the Earth, who offer no Sacrifices to the Deities they pretend to worship. This is not improbable, for there are some that have no Idea of any DEITY at all, as has been before observed;—but this is not the Case with Mankind in general; and serves to shew that the clearest Truths which depend upon Instruction often wear out of the Minds of Men, and are sometimes entirely lost, which proves the Insufficiency of mere Nature in Religion, and the Necessity of divine Revelation. However, as to the Doctrine of Sacrifices, nothing is more certain than that *this* Mode of Worship was *universally* practised in the first Ages of the World, and is very nearly so at this Day, amongst the Heathens.

by those who wish to get rid of true Religion, or are governed in the Profession of it entirely by the Dictates of *natural Reason*. Nor could such an Idea be suggested by any evil Spirit, because when rightly understood, as taught in' our Bibles, it appears wisely calculated to answer many moral Ends and Purposes of the greatest Importance.—

Sacrifices are a kind of symbolical Institutions, designed on the one Hand to represent the present polluted, guilty, miserable Condition of Mankind as Sinners; and the Justice, and Mercy of God on the other. The Death of the bleeding Victim reminds them of their Subjection to Death, and all the fearful Consequences of Sin—God's accepting the Sacrifice, in their Stead and Behalf, shews his Placability and Readiness to forgive all humble Penitents and admit them to his Favour, and at the same Time affords them the most affecting Motives to Repentance.—In short, the Scripture Doctrine of Sacrifice tends to give us the most striking Views of the
Purity

Purity of God; the Majesty of his moral Government, his Abhorrence of Sin, and the exceeding Riches of his Benevolence and Mercy;—to humble the Sinners Pride, forbid his Despair, inspire him with Hope, Love, Gratitude, and the most entire Devotion to the Will of God. All which demonstrates that it must owe its Original to his Wisdom and Goodness, and not to the inventive Powers of human Wisdom or Folly; much less to diabolical Malevolence and Delusion.

The Consciousness of Guilt tends to make us afraid of the Justice and Power of God, and to drive us from his Presence, so that whatever pleasing Ideas we might entertain of his Goodness and Mercy at other Times; yet when we come to see our Sins in a just Light, and take a nearer View of the divine Purity and Majesty, we shall find our Fears awakened, and our Spirits held in trembling Suspense about our Pardon and Acceptance with God, however penitent, and anxiously desirous of those Blessings
we

we may be. To deliver us from this Distress the Doctrine of atoning Sacrifice is held up to our Notice in the Bible, as opening unto us an effectual Door of Hope—but it should be observed, that both the patriarchal Sacrifices, and those appointed under the Dispensation of *Moses*, were but the general Outlines of the great Plan of God's merciful Kindness to Man, the full Meaning of which centred in the grand Sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST which he *offered once for all*; and to which they all referred and owed all their Efficacy.*

And what further shews that Religion owes its Origin to divine Revelation is, that not one of all the many learned Philosophers amongst the most enlightened Heathens has ever been able to give us any Thing like a clear and consistent System of Theism; or teach Mankind the Nature and Perfections of the DEITY,

* This Subject will be farther considered in the Letter upon the Doctrine of Atonement.

and how they might worship him in a rational and acceptable Manner.

Even at *Athens* itself, the Centre of the Wisdom and Learning of the Heathen World ; where human Reason was in its highest Degree of Cultivation and Power, and where every Subject, capable of being investigated by it, was so well understood ; even there we find the grossest Blindness in the important Concerns of Religion, and the Practice of the most stupid Idolatry ; and this not only amongst the illiterate Vulgar, but amongst those most admired for their natural and acquired Accomplishments. *Socrates*, *Plato*, and others, have said many fine Things of DEITY, but after all, were so miserably in the dark about his Perfections and Worship, and how to obtain his Favour, that the meanest and most illiterate true Christian can give us an infinitely better Account of these important Articles of Religion than the wisest of them have done. And even that little they did know was owing more to traditional or written Revelation,

lation, than the Researches of their own Reason.—

While on the other Hand we find amongst the People under *Moses*, then perhaps the most unphilosophical, illiterate, and stupid of any in the World, the sublimest Notions of God, the most credible Account of the Origin of the World, and the best System of Religion and Morals, next to what we have under the present Dispensation of the Gospel. Now to what could this Superiority be owing? Most certainly to divine Revelation; or, to *Israel's* being favoured with supernatural Instruction; while the Philosophers were left entirely to their own beclouded Reason, or to the neglected Fragments of Tradition. Had the Light of Nature alone been sufficient for the Purposes of true Religion, the Philosophers most certainly possessed it, in a far higher and more extensive Degree than the *Israelites*; we should therefore have expected to have found the grand *Desideratum* amongst the former, rather than the latter.—The

Aim

Aim of *Moses* was to teach the Knowledge and Worship of the TRUE GOD, and to root out the Idolatry that then reigned in the World: About this important Business the Philosophers gave themselves no Concern. If their *Notions* were a little more refined than those of the Vulgar, yet they gave into their *Practice* and countenanced their Idolatry, by publicly conforming to all the superstitious Rites of their Country. And it is said that even *Socrates*, wise and good as he seems in other Respects to have been, talked of sacrificing a Cock to *Æsculapius*, and composed Hymns in Praise of *Apollo* a little before he died. Yea, even the *Israelites* themselves, when they forsook the Light of divine Revelation, to follow that of their own dark Reason; fell into abominable Idolatries. Let us talk no more then of the Sufficiency of Reason in the Concerns of Religion; for in Fact, the strenuous Assertors of this Sufficiency, owe all their best and clearest Notions of the Subject, to that benign Light they so

zealously oppose, and the Necessity of which they deny. —

And, indeed, it appears from the History of Mankind, that it was the general received Opinion, that some God must be their Instructor, in the great Business of Religion. There never was any Leader in this Business, were his Pretensions true or false (the Deists themselves scarcely excepted *) but set out upon this Ground, announced a divine Commission, and declared that he received from Heaven the Doctrines he taught: Witness *Numa* and *Mahomet*, as well as *Moses* and CHRIST. Nor can it be maintained on any rational Principle, that the human Mind is incapable of receiving the Knowledge of particular Truths from the DEITY, or that it is any Way unworthy of his infinite Dignity to hold such a Correspondence with Man.

I am, &c.

* Alluding to the well known Case of Lord *Herbert*.

L E T T E R . VII.

Some Hints on the Immortality of the human Soul, as a Doctrine of supernatural Revelation.

DEAR SIR,

AMONGST the several Articles of what is called the *Religion of Nature*, that of the IMMORTALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL, has generally been reckoned one of no small Importance ; but which, I apprehend, will appear, upon a fair Examination, to be a Doctrine of divine Revelation, and not the Discovery of Man's Reason, though agreeable to it.

Many of the Heathens, indeed, admitted this Doctrine, and have said many good Things about it, though their

Ideas were extremely vague and confused. They found it very flattering to their Ambition and Hopes, and therefore wished it to be true, and sometimes thought it so, though at other Times they doubted it. *

Mankind feel themselves *mortal*, here therefore the Light of Nature is sufficient;

* Even *Cicero*, though sometimes in Raptures with the Thought, at other Times doubts, and knows not what to think—Now it is—“*Quod si in hoc erro—libenter erro; nec mihi hunc errorem, quo dilector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo.*” (*De Senect.*) At another Time he hesitates, especially about the Nature of this Immortality, and particularly the State of Punishment, and somewhere says,—“*Non est Anus tam excors quæ credat.*” *Juvenal* says, “*Nec pueri credunt.*” And on the Roman Theatre it was sung—“*post mortem nihil.*” *Voltaire* on Tolerat.—*Cicero* *Tusc. Quest.* l. v. 5. 6, &c. *Socrates*, *Seneca*, and even *Plato*, sometimes speak very doubtfully on this Head. *Aristotle*, *Cæsar*, *Plutarch*, and others were absolute Infidels. See Dr. *Whitby*'s Note on 2 Tim. i. 10. *Cicero* *Tusc. l.* i. 5. 31. *Dicæarchus* wrote three Books against the Soul's Immortality. See Mrs. *Carter*'s Epist. p. 19.

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but how Creatures so circumstanced, and so ignorant of the Nature of the human Soul, should, without the Assistance of supernatural Revelation, discover that they were *immortal*, and in the Midst of Death even dream of Life, is inconceivable. All that Philosophy can do in this Case, is to Reason upon the Principles of Nature within its Reach, but here are no such Principles. When we come first into the World, there is no Trace of an immortal Mind perceivable in any of us; and when we die, or go out of the World, we leave no Trace of such a Mind behind us as still existing; however brilliant the Evidences of such a Mind before, it is all impenetrable Darknes now. Here then all Reasoning is at an End, without some farther Light. An Argument for the *Probability* of the Soul's still existing may be drawn from the Greatness and Excellency of its Powers; the utter Insufficiency of all temporal Good to fill its Capacity and satisfy its Desires; and the strong Expectations

pectations it carries about with it of something beyond the utmost Limits of Time, &c. but this is all: *Certainty* must be derived from another Source. For, we are to remember, Man is a guilty Creature, and has forfeited his whole Right to Life, and is actually under a Sentence of Death, which, for aught he knows, may include the entire Destruction of his whole Existence. Besides, the all-wise God may, for any Thing mere Reason can tell us to the contrary, have many other Ends to answer by those Powers and Affections of the human Mind, than that of their future eternal Existence.

Moreover, all created Existence must depend upon the Will of the Creator, and therefore though we now exist, we cannot justly infer that we shall always exist, unless God himself is pleased to assure us of it.

Some consider the *Immateriality* of the Soul, or its being a pure indivisible Spirit, as a Proof of its Immortality: But
though

though I believe the Soul to be properly a spiritual or immaterial Substance ; yet I can't infer its Immortality from thence. Because this is a mere metaphysical Hypothesis, without the Light of Revelation ;—because we have very imperfect Ideas of the abstract Nature of Spirit ;—and because, if it proved any Thing here, it would prove too much ; for it would prove that the human Soul was *necessarily*, and consequently *independently* immortal, and that even God himself could not destroy or put an End to its Existence, which is too absurd and monstrous an Idea to be admitted. GOD ALONE *hath absolute and independent Immortality* : All other, even immaterial Beings, depend on *his Pleasure* for their Continuance in Existence, and not upon their *Immateriality*. The Almighty can endue even material Substances with immortal Life, if he please ; and certainly will do so at the Resurrection. We conclude, therefore, that the Idea of the immortal Duration of the Soul of Man, which is so generally

generally received, is derived from the Light of supernatural Revelation, imparted more or less to all Mankind.

The Doctrine of our immortal Existence is extremely agreeable to our Natures as Men, and to our Desires of Happiness; and when that Happiness seems to open to our View, and flatters our Hopes, we pant and long for the Possession, and are easily persuaded what is so delightful must be true:—But when we come to examine the Matter more coolly, by the Light of Reason only, Doubts will arise; and if, from the Consciousness of Guilt, and the Displeasure of God which we feel we have deserved, we see Reason to fear our Immortality will be miserable, we shall find ourselves disposed to catch at every Objection we meet with against the Doctrine, wish it may not be true, too easily persuade ourselves it is not, and gladly embrace the Idea of a total Extinction of Being at Death, as our only Consolation. In such a Situation of Mind as this, the
mere

mere Light of Nature will do but very little towards the real Belief of the Doctrine of future Existence;—a Belief of infinite Importance to our Happiness, as it affords us a very powerful Motive to that Repentance, without which we must perish; and lays a very powerful Restraint upon the vicious Propensities of our Natures which we are so prone to indulge.—The Thought of this Truth presented to the Mind, in the tremendous Light in which divine Revelation sets it, has often made even the hardened Sinner tremble; shewn him, in the clearest Light, the absolute Necessity of a Reformation, and kept him from putting into Execution many an horrid Purpose of his Soul, to which he was tempted.

In short, the whole of real Religion depends so entirely on divine Revelation, that where this Revelation is lost, or rejected for the mere Light of Nature, there all Religion is lost also, though the Light of Nature still remain

main, as the miserable Condition of some of the Savage Nations abundantly proves. And even amongst the Professors of Christianity we find, that in Proportion as the sacred Scriptures are made to give Way to the Sufficiency of human Reason, the Spirit and Power of true Religion evaporates and dies away.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R VIII.

*That the Bible speaks of Religion as RE-
VEALED.—The Revelation UNIVERSAL
AND ALWAYS the SAME in Substance.*

AS there are many, my dear Sir, who sincerely believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and yet talk of a *natural Religion* as distinguishable from the *Revealed*, it may not be amiss for us to consider this Matter a little more particularly, as it appears in that divine Book.—There we learn that true Religion, in all its fundamental and leading Articles, from the Days of *Adam*, to the Appearance of *CHRIST*, and the Ministry of the *Apostles*, was taught by God himself, or the Inspiration of his holy Spirit. That
our

our first Parents were so taught, appears from the prohibitory Command given them, not to eat of the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and from the Institution of the *Sabbath*; about the Nature and Design of neither of which they could have known any Thing without divine Inspiration:—The Consequence of Disobedience in the former Instance they were told was Death;—and as to the latter, that God, having finished his Work of Creation, *blest the seventh Day and sanctified it*; that is, set it apart for holy Uses, with an Assurance of rendering the Duties of it peculiarly delightful and profitable. But what these Duties were, and how to be acceptably performed, they could not possibly know without divine Instruction: Nor could they, indeed, ever have thought of numbering their Days by sevens, rather than by sixes or eights, &c. without such Instruction. Other Divisions of Time might have been discovered by a proper Use of the Light of Nature; but the fixing

fixing upon this *weekly* Period must be by special Direction from Heaven,* and if so, much more the Nature and Use of this sacred Day. For, supposing (though not allowing) that the Light of Nature might shew them that God ought to be worshipped, they would scarcely have thought of doing it on *this* Day, any more than on any other, without he had condescended to inform them.

After the Fall of our first Parents, when a new System of Religion became necessary, but which it was impossible in the Nature of Things, they should be able to discover, by the Light of their depraved Reason.—The Bible informs us —That the blessed God was graciously pleased to become their Instructor; and accordingly upon this awful Event, we hear him saying, † that *the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Head of the Serpent*. Which Words, though addressed more immediately to the Serpent, or ra-

* Grotius de Ver. Relig. Christ.

† Gen. iii. 15.

ther the Devil himself who had acted as the Tempter by the Medium of the Serpent, were spoken in the Hearing of the guilty Pair, and no Doubt meant for their Encouragement and Comfort. Agreeable to this Idea Expositors in general, both *Jewish* and *Christian* understand the *Messiah* to be referred to, and we Christians the LORD JESUS CHRIST; who comes, as the Apostle tells us expressly, to *destroy the Works of the Devil*. Here then we see the first Dawnings of the Light of the glorious Gospel upon our benighted World.

The Institution of Sacrifices of Atonement for Sin, before hinted, we may reasonably suppose took Place upon this Occasion; and the Meaning and Design of them, and the Reference they had to the Redeemer then announced, were doubtless pointed out to our first Parents by their divine Instructor. The Brevity of the sacred History here would not admit of a Detail of Particulars upon the Subject, nor was it necessary to us, but the Sum and Substance of the whole,

as we may learn from what is related, is this—*Free Pardon of Sin, and eternal Life, as the Gift of God through a Mediator, to all penitent Sinners who sincerely believe this Discovery of Mercy, and live in Conformity to its Nature and Design.*

This Doctrine, no doubt, *Adam* taught his Family, and they theirs, and so on, through succeeding Generations, more or less perfectly. Accordingly we read * *that in Process of Time, or, as the Hebrew is, IN THE END OF DAYS, i. e. of the Week, or on the seventh Day* (as some learned Men have observed) *Cain and Abel* brought their respective Offerings to the LORD. *Cain* appears to have had no Faith in the revealed Doctrine, *that without shedding of Blood there is no Remission*, and therefore only brought of the Fruits of the Ground. *Abel* believed that important Truth as essential to the Religion of Sinners; and brought of the Firstlings of his Flock; and is therefore

* Gen. iv. 3. 4. † Heb. xi. 4.

said, *by Faith* to have offered a more excellent Sacrifice than *Cain*

This System of evangelical Religion was supported from Time to Time, by renewed Admonitions, and additional Discoveries from Heaven, granted to *Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses*, and so on, 'till, in the *Fulness of Time*, God sent forth his SON, the promised Redeemer, who after appearing in our Flesh, suffering and dying upon a Cross; rising from the Dead, and ascending into Heaven, opened a new Treasure of Grace, and poured more abundant Glory upon the Religions of fallen Man. Thus we see that in every Age, and under every Form the Substance of their Religion was the same—the same Doctrine of gracious Salvation through a Mediator. Accordingly we read that *Abraham* saw the Day of CHRIST, had the Gospel preached unto him, and taught his Household—and that the just *always lived*, and *were saved by Faith even as we*. All which appears with the fullest Evidence in the eleventh Chapter of the Epistle

Epistle to the Hebrews.—There are in Fact three several Editions of the Gospel, (viz.) the *Patriarchal*, the *Mosaic*, and the *Apostolical*; but all the same divine Charter, in Nature, Design, Tendency; holding forth the same God, the same REDEEMER, the same *Holiness and eternal Life*.

And from this View of the Matter, it appears also that this Religion is UNIVERSAL, and has been communicated, more or less, to all Nations; or, as the Apostle expresses it, *preached to every Creature*. This was certainly the Case in the Days of *Adam*, and his immediate Posterity, and of *Noah* after the Flood, &c. and so on, more or less, even to this Day.* They

* It is true, Mankind both before and after the Flood soon corrupted their Religion by their own superstitious Inventions; but still some of the same leading Principles were preserved amongst them; such as the Belief of a God, the moral Governour of the World;—of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; the Necessity of Sacrifices, Repentance, &c.

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They must, therefore, be exceedingly mistaken who speak of the *Gospel*, or, as it is sometimes called, *Christianity*, as entirely unknown in the World, 'till the Appearance of CHRIST in the Flesh, and give the Deists very great Advantage in the Dispute between us.—“ For,” say they, “ if God so loved the World, as “ you and your Gospel tell us he did, “ how came he to leave its miserable Inhabitants without any Knowledge of “ himself, and his Mercy, for so many “ Thousands of Years, as upon your “ Plan he must have done? And, if he did “ reveal his Will to them, that he did it no “ sooner, nor make it even then *universal*, “ leaving nine Parts out of ten entirely “ destitute of it.”—But, if, as I have endeavoured to shew, *Christianity* be in Fact, though not *as old as the Creation*, yet, as old as the Fall, all Objections against it, upon the Ground above mentioned,

This is clear from the general History of Mankind; and particularly from the sacred History, as appears from the Case of the *Ninivites*. *Jonah* iii.

tioned, are entirely removed.—Thus from the whole I think we may safely conclude, that what of *true* Religion there is any where in the World, be it more or less, is not properly the *Religion of Nature*, but of *Revelation*; and that the Religion of the Patriarchal Age (some Remains of which are to be found in the Heathen World, at this Day) is as *truly* and *really*, though not so *clearly* and *fully* Evangelical as ours;—The Object of Worship, the Ground of Hope, and the Medium of Acceptance, being in the *Main* the same, however diversified in Circumstances, by particular Dispensations, and however those Dispensations may have been corrupted.

The *Christian Religion* has, indeed, its Peculiarities, and the State of Mankind requires that it should; but these Peculiarities come attested by such real and striking Interpositions of divine Power and Wisdom as no other System of Religion ever did or could pretend to.—Its Declarations and Promises answer, in the most satisfactory Manner, to the

clearest and most rational Idea Mankind have of God, and of their Duty, and Happiness; and, particularly, to those inward Feelings of the divine Displeasure against them for their Sins, to which, by the Constitution of their Nature, they are liable.* If there be a God, as we are sure there is, he must be such an one as the Christian Revelation, taken in its plain natural Meaning, exhibits to our View. If Man be any Thing more than absolute Vanity, he must be what that Revelation *describes*; and

* It is very remarkable, that there never was any System of Religion and Morals, ever known in the World, the Principles of which were really adapted to the common Sense and Feelings of the human Mind, and its true State and Condition, but that contained in our Bibles; for which Reason, if I had no other, I should embrace it. None of them can tell us how a sinful *Man* may be accepted as *just* with God; or answer that most interesting of all Questions—*What shall I do to be saved?* to the Satisfaction of a truly enlightened Conscience.

and if he would be really happy, must be what that Revelation *requires* him to be, even a penitent Believer in the Testimony it bears to the Being Perfections and Mercy of God in his Son, sincerely devoted to his Will, and capable of tasting the highest Satisfaction and Delight in the Consciousness of this Favour.—Light is not more adapted to delight the Eye, Music the Ear, Health the Diseased, or Liberty the miserable Captive, than the Evangelical Religion to cheer and delight the Heart of Man. It is, therefore, very justly stiled, *glad Tidings of great Joy*—a Word worthy of all *Acceptation*; the *glorious Gospel of the blessed God*. But why so? Not merely because it affords a more perfect System of Morals than was commonly known, and sets a future State in a clearer and more certain Light, but, chiefly, because it points out a sure and effectual Way for the Recovery of fallen Man; tells him how he may be forgiven, made like God, in true Holiness, and enjoy his Favour
and

and Friendship for ever. * In a Word ; we see, in the Gospel of CHRIST ; the divine Perfections and Government set in so amiable a Light, have such strong Consolations there suggested to us, against all the Calamities of Life, and the Terrors of Death ; and such glorious Prospects opened to our View in the eternal World, that if we are not lost to all the rational Notions and the moral Feelings of our Minds, we cannot help approving it, and receiving it as worthy of the divine Wisdom and Goodness, and deserving of our most grateful Acknowledgments and eternal Obedience ; and I will add, it is no inconsiderable Evidence of the divine Original of the Religion of CHRIST, that

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* It must be an unspeakable Consolation to the first guilty Pair, to find the dreadful Sentence of Death suspended, and the Hope of Forgiveness, and of a better Life set before them, through the Mercy of GOD in the promised Redeemer. It should be Matter of still greater Consolation to us, who are guilty too, to have the Way of Happiness opened to us with so much more abundant Glory.

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no truly *good Man*, or one that feared and loved God from his Heart, and really delighted in moral Excellency, was ever found amongst its determined Opposers, but the Vicious and Profane, the Enemies to God and Goodness only.

I am, &c.

LET. IX.

L E T T E R IX.

*A farther View of the Religion of the Bible,
and particularly of the Doctrine of the
Atonement, with the Objections against it.*

HUMAN Reason, you will acknowledge, dear Friend, in its present State is very imperfect, and liable to be imposed on by false Appearances and first Impressions, and too often mistakes Error for Truth, and Truth for Error; no Wonder then it should be so often ready to hesitate and stumble at some of the Truths of supernatural Revelation, when relying upon its own Strength, though every Way as rational as those which this Reason itself is supposed to discover by its own
Light,

Light, and generally attended with Evidence every Way as clear and incontestible: Unbiaſſed Reason, therefore, will as readily embrace the former as the latter. It is allowed that there are ſeveral particular Facts and Doctrines recorded in the Bible, which are beyond the Power of our natural Faculties fully to comprehend; but ſo there are in what is called *Natural Religion*; ſuch as the abſtract Nature and Perfections of the DEITY, the Manner of their Exiſtence, and Operations; his Immenſity, Eternity, &c. The Belief of which lies at the Foundation of all Religion, though there is nothing contrary to Reason, or irreconcilable with its Dictates in any of theſe Particulars. We have, therefore, very juſt and rational Grounds for believing all the Truths of ſupernatural Revelation, however incomprehenſible they may appear to our weak Minds, while Reason itſelf allows they are not contradictory to it.

Since the Fall of Man, as already hinted, the DEITY appears in a new Character,

racter, that of a REDEEMER, and accordingly a *new Revelation* of his Will takes Place, both attended with Circumstances, entirely out of the Sphere of what we usually call *Nature*. By this Revelation new Truths are conveyed to the Mind of Man concerning his moral State of Guilt and Misery, and Deliverance from it. He is brought acquainted *with the deep Things of God*, his Justice and Mercy, *Things which Eye hath not seen, nor Heart of Man conceived*, and consequently are out of our merely natural Way of Thinking; and yet, when proposed to us, if duly attended to, they will appear perfectly rational and consistent with every right Principle in the Constitution of the human Mind. Man is treated as a rational Being as much since, as before his Fall into Sin. Every Thing necessary for him to know and comprehend, is as knowable and comprehensible *now* as *then*. The *Love of CHRIST*, though it *passeth Knowledge*, is, nevertheless, as rational, as if it did not: For, it by no Means follows, that because we do not under-

understand the whole of a Thing, it must be therefore irrational to believe it, and treat it as if we knew nothing about it. Such Reasoning and Conduct would break in upon the Constitution of Nature as well as Religion.

The leading Truths in Christianity, and those more peculiar to it are— That Mankind are all Sinners, and as such exposed to the Displeasure of God; and rendered utterly incapable of the Enjoyment of Communion with him, by the moral Depravity of their Minds. That *God is in CHRIST*, reconciling *the World to himself*; by making his Soul an *Offering of Atonement or Propitiation for Sin*; and sending his HOLY SPIRIT, to enlighten our Understandings, subdue our Wills, and purify our Hearts, unite us to CHRIST, enable us to obey the Will of God, and qualify us for the Enjoyment of his Friendship and Love; which the Scriptures call our *being born again*, by the Word and Spirit of God.

Against these Peculiarities of the Christian Revelation; particularly against the
Atone-

Atonement of Sin by the Death of CHRIST, and the *Change of our Principles and Conduct, by the SPIRIT and Grace of CHRIST,* some who possess, in no mean Degree, the Powers of Reason, have been too ready to object; though rather from not clearly understanding the Subjects, than from any real Absurdity found in them. For Reason truly enlightened, and not under the Influence of violent Prejudices, will find no just Ground for the Support of any Objections here. It is true, both the Doctrine of *Atonement*, and the special *Influence of the Divine Spirit*, stand in direct Opposition to that Pride of human Nature, which we are all too prone to indulge; but we should remember that *corrupt Pride* is not *Reason*; and it is the declared Design of the Gospel Revelation (as it is fit it should be) to take away all Ground of boasting from Man, laying him low at the Footstool of the divine Majesty, and teach him to expect both Righteousness and Strength in JEHOVAH his GOD, as Matter of pure Grace. The Gospel brings the righteous Pharisee,

Pharisee, and the unholy Publican, under the same Obligations to the divine Mercy;—Forgiveness is as necessary to the former as to the latter; and, if he expects to find it, he must come into the Presence of the most HIGH, *with a God be merciful unto me a Sinner*. Both are indebted to the Sacrifice of CHRIST, and both must draw nigh unto God by Faith in *this new and living Way*; the Consciences of both must be *purged from dead Works by the Blood of JESUS, and both sanctified by the same Spirit*, in Order to their Enjoyment of eternal Life.

The *Rationality* of the Doctrine of the Atonement of Sin by the Sacrifice of CHRIST, appears in its being so eminently well calculated to set in the most affecting Light—the detestable Nature of Sin,—the Greatness of the divine Justice; and the awful Depth of that Misery into which, as Sinners, we are plunged. It is true, God's declaring that he will not forgive Sin without Repentance, affords some Evidence of these Truths;—but they certainly appear in a much more striking

striking Light, when we consider, that Sin is so extremely offensive to an holy God, that Floods of penitential Tears, and the most sincere Returns to Duty, cannot properly atone for the Guilt of one Transgression, or satisfactorily repair the Dishonour it has done to the Majesty of the divine Government; but that something of infinitely greater Worth, than any Thing the Sinner can offer, is necessary, to make Way for his Restoration to the divine Favour. And, by the scriptural Accounts of the Matter, it appears, that infinite Wisdom would admit of nothing less, in this Case, than the Incarnation, Sufferings, and Death of the BELOVED SON OF GOD; and that the most Penitent and Reformed amongst Men will be accepted ONLY through him. This, indeed, is the *Glory due to his Name*. And, certainly, in this View of Things we must see many, peculiar and affecting, Motives to Repentance, which we should otherwise have been utter Strangers to. But, as this Doctrine at the same Time leads us to see our own Unworthiness

worthiness, Guilt, and Wretchedness, in a Light far more humiliating and mortifying, no Wonder it should meet with Objections from the false Pride which is so pleasing to our depraved Natures.

I mean not here to state this important Doctrine, and answer the Objections to it, at large, but only give you some general Idea of it, with a few elucidating Hints tending to confirming you in the blessed Hope grounded upon it. I would nevertheless, by the Way observe, that all the Objections to this Doctrine, I have ever yet met with, amongst the Professors of Christianity; seem to arise from some mistaken Idea of it, and that owing *partly*, at least, to the Misrepresentations that some of its Friends have given it; and partly to their own want of a true and lively Feeling of the Malignity of their Guilt, a just View of the Purity and Justice of God, and of the Suitability and Importance of an atoning Mediator, in Order to the Enjoyment of true Peace of Conscience. For, it is observable, that whenever any of the guilty Children.

Children of Men have been brought to see themselves, INDEED, as Sinners against the most HIGH, HOLY, AND JUST GOD, and to *realize* in their Minds, the Purity of his Nature, the Equity of his Laws, the Majesty of his Government, —when they have *felt* as well as *seen*, the Depravity of their Hearts and Lives, and found by Experience the awful Weight of such Expressions in their Bibles as these—*Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity—God is angry with the Wicked every Day—The Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all Unrighteousness—The Wages of Sin is Death—Without shedding of Blood there is no Remission*; our GOD is a *consuming Fire*, &c. When, I say, this has been the Case, whatever Hope they had before derived from the Idea of the comparative Smallness of their Guilt, and the mere Mercy of GOD; and however penitent and well disposed they might have thought themselves, yet, upon this fuller and more lively Conviction, they have found their Hope fail them, and that nothing could
satisfy

satisfy their Doubts, remove their Fears, and restore solid Peace to their Consciences, but a just View of the Sacrifice of CHRIST, and an humble Trust in it, as the only divinely appointed Medium of removing their Guilt, and opening a Way to the Enjoyment of the pardoning Mercy of God: * But resting here, with a truly penitential Faith, they have found, by happy Experience, a peculiar Sweetness in those Expressions—*We have Redemption through his Blood*, even the
For-

* I dare not say, as some do, that a Man cannot be a real Christian, who may happen to stumble at this Doctrine, as generally explained by such as believe the Death of Christ to be a real atoning Sacrifice for Sin; or who may entertain such mistaken Notions of it as seem to sink it much below its true Dignity; but still I must say, I think their Mistakes of no small Consequence to the Interest of Religion, and the true Spirit of the Gospel; and that they arise from too high an Opinion of the Authority and Sufficiency of their own *merely natural Reason*; and some Prejudices too hastily taken up against the Doctrine from the unscriptural and absurd Representations of it they have met with.

Forgiveness of Sins—The Blood of Christ cleanseth from all Sin—purges the Conscience from dead Works—who has loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood ; in a Word, to a Mind, under such Convictions, the Doctrine of CHRIST crucified has been indeed the *Power of God to Salvation*—and the very Name of JESUS as Life from the Dead. Here they perceive with the most delightful Astonishment and Gratitude, how the awful Majesty of Heaven against whom they have sinned, can be *just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Here all that the most enlightened Reason, and the tenderest Conscience, can suggest to the humble Penitent, as necessary to his Peace and Reconciliation with God, is to be found, and *here ONLY.* For, as through a lively Belief of this Grace, we receive the Forgiveness of our Sins, and are made Heirs of the Promise of eternal Life, by the Constitution of the Gospel ; so this Way we also derive that evangelical Disposition to Repentance and Holiness, which is so expressly required,

not,

not, indeed, as an Atonement for our Sins, but as a necessary Qualification for the *actual* Enjoyment of the Divine Favour.

And as this Doctrine of the Atonement is so essential to the rational Consolation of guilty Man, the blessed God has taken Care to set it before us, in his Book, in the strongest Light, and to speak of it with the most determinate Precision mortal Language is capable of; so that it requires an uncommon Degree of critical Abilities, to put upon the Words he has been pleased to use in this Case, any Thing like a plausible Sense, contrary to the Idea of a true and proper Sacrifice, or Propitiation for the Sins of Men.

They who deny the Doctrine of a true and proper Atonement, generally represent its Advocates, as supposing the Mind of God to be really changed from *Anger* to *Favour* by the Death of CHRIST:— And as believing that a Confidence in his Sacrifice will answer the End of all Repentance and Obedience, than which nothing can be farther from the Truth,

with respect to all sober and rational Defenders of the Doctrine.—We as firmly believe the absolute Necessity of Repentance and Obedience, in their Place, and as the indispensable Qualifications for the Enjoyment of Pardon and eternal Life, as they who deny the Atonement can possibly do : Nor do we suppose God at *Enmity* with us before the Death of CHRIST, any more than after it ; or, that his Mind is changed from Anger to Placability ; from Wrath to Mercy by it :—So far from this, we consider the very Appointment of CHRIST, as a Sacrifice for our Sins, to be owing entirely to the pure Love and Benevolence of the DEITY : Or, in our LORD's own Words, That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting Life ; * that having a Right to punish Sin, or shew his just Resentment against it, he chose to do it this Way ; and having a Right to forgive it also, that he chose

* John iii. 16.

to do it through this Medium, so admirably calculated to do the most signal Honour to his moral Government, and most effectually promote the Happiness of the Governed. *They* suppose God forgives Sin as an Act merely of governing Power and Dominion : We suppose God does not govern the moral World by *mere Power*, but by *Wisdom and Goodness*, that is, *Justice* ; and, that he therefore pays a due Regard to his Justice in the Forgiveness of Sin, as well as to his Mercy. A DEITY possessed of Almighty Power, without Justice, is dreadful even to think of ;— Or suppose him ever so merciful, yet, while we consider that Mercy as dispensed by a *merely arbitrary Power*, and without Regard to the Honours of his Justice, we degrade the Dignity of his Government, and weaken the Ground of the penitent Sinner's Confidence and Hope.

“ A God all Mercy, is a God unjust.” *

It is also objected—“ that punishing
“ the Innocent for the Crimes of the

* Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*.

“ Guilty,

“ Guilty, is a shocking Inconsistency
 “ with all our Ideas of Justice.”—Not
 in the least, if the Innocent voluntarily
 consents to it; suffers only for a Time;
 and, as the Reward of his Benevolence,
 possesses the highest Honours, and most
 abundant Felicity; particularly, the Ho-
 nour of *a Name above every Name*, The
 Government of Universal Nature, and
 the sublime Satisfaction of saving My-
 riads of intelligent Creatures from the
 Miseries of everlasting Destruction, and
 bringing them into the Enjoyment of
 eternal Life and Glory.

It may also be argued, in favour of this
 Doctrine, that the peculiar Nature and
 extreme Greatness of the Sufferings of
 CHRIST, cannot be rationally accounted
 for, but upon the Supposition of his dy-
 ing as a real Atonement for our Sins.
 He was himself perfectly innocent, and
 therefore could not, on his own Ac-
 count, deserve to suffer and die at all;
 nor, indeed, be subject to it, without the
 Injustice our Opponents complain of—To
 suffer as he did without any Cause in
 himself,

himself, or any Benefit to others, is irrational to suppose; and if for *any* Benefit, why not for the greatest conceivable, such as our Idea of an Atonement implies? As a Martyr to the Truth and a Pattern of Patience, he might have suffered the Pains of Reproach and Contempt, of Scourging and Crucifixion from the Injustice of the vilest of Men as he did; but surely, his inward Distresses, the Darkness that made his *Soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death*; the bitter Anguish he felt, when being in an Agony he *sweat, as it were, great Drops of Blood falling down to the Earth*, while he prayed that the *Cup might pass from him*; and when expiring on the Cross, he cries out, *my GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me*;—surely all this must have some farther Meaning, proceed from some other Cause, and be designed to answer some higher End, than mere Martyrdom; or the setting us an Example of Patience and Resignation to the Will of GOD. We never hear such Language as this from Prophets and Apostles,

or

or any of the Martyrs for the Truth. Shall *David* say, that *though he walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, he will fear no Evil, and shall the SON OF GOD, express there all the Horrors of trembling Amazement ! Shall Apostles and Martyrs rejoice, and even triumph amidst the most exquisite Torments, and shall their DIVINE MASTER so miserably groan under his, and yet the Reason and End be the same, the setting an Example of Patience, and sealing the Testimony of Truth ?—No : The Book of GOD makes an important Distinction, and says expressly, that HE SUFFERED FOR SINS, * not his own, for *he knew no Sin*, it must be then, as we read there, for *the Sin of the World* ; the *Just for the Unjust*, that *he might bring us unto GOD* ;—bearing our Sins, in his Body upon the Tree, for the LORD hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all, &c. No Words can be more clear, intelligible,

* 1 Pet. iii. 18. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Isa. liii. 5, 6. Heb. ix. 13—22. Mat. xxvi. 26—28. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 24—26.

telligible, decisive, than these, or more expressive of the Idea of a true and proper Atonement, but by no Means agree with that of an Example or Testimony. And the Apostle, in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, has taught us to consider the *Blood of CHRIST*, as having the same Effect respecting *moral* Guilt, as the *Blood of Bulls and Goats* had respecting *ceremonial*, which was that of Atonement, or affording a legal Ground of Pardon, and Admittance into the divine Presence; and therefore, in Reference to both, says—*Without shedding of Blood there is no Remission*. To say then, that our Repentance and Reformation is all that is necessary to this End, is flatly to contradict the Apostle. In a Word, our blessed LORD himself, has declared the Truth I am pleading for, in the Institution of his sacred SUPPER; where he teaches us, not only to *remember* his painful *Death*, but also and particularly the great important End of it,—*the Remission of Sin*, saying, *This is my Blood of the New Testament*, (or Cove-

Covenant) WHICH IS SHED—FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. It appears to me awful Presumption to endeavour, by speculative Refinements, and the Quibbles of Hyper-criticism, to baffle and set aside such Evidence as THIS.

I am, &c.

LET.

L E T T E R X.

The Doctrine of divine Influences, with Objections against it, and against Christianity in general, considered.

LET us now, my dear Sir, attend a little to the Doctrine of the gracious Influences of the DIVINE SPIRIT, as concerned in effecting that moral Change in us which is necessary to our eternal Happiness, and which the sacred Scriptures call a being *born again*; created in CHRIST JESUS; a *new Creature*; *born of the Spirit*, &c.

This Doctrine certainly is not, cannot be, the Discovery of natural Reason, but is derived entirely from supernatural Revelation; and necessarily implies the humiliating Truth of our own Weakness
and

and Depravity, or the miserably impaired State of the Springs of moral Action in us; and is, therefore, strenuously opposed, by the Pride of fallen Nature. The chief Objection is,—“That it is a Doctrine utterly inconsistent with the moral Freedom of the human Mind, and with the Nature of Virtue.” But the Objection is founded on a mistaken Notion of the Nature of the divine Influence and its Effects upon us, and takes for granted, what is not really the Case; and consequently is of no Force. It supposes that the human Mind is *forced*, or acted upon *merely* in a mechanical Way; whereas the divine Power I am speaking of, operates by Way of *Illumination, Conviction, Persuasion*: That is, by representing the Truths contained in the Bible, respecting our Relation to God; our Condition as Sinners; and the Mercy of God in his Son, &c. in such a clear, strong, and affecting Light, as engages our particular Attention, awakens in us the most ardent Desires after universal Righte-

Righteousness ; and disposes us to practise it, by imparting new Life to our Purposes and Resolutions, and supporting us in them.

And why is not all this as every Way consistent with Reason, the moral Freedom of the Mind, and the Nature of Virtue, as our persuading one another to any particular Instance of virtuous Conduct, by such Instructions and Arguments as are within our Reach ? And why should not the Obedience, this Way effected, be as truly and properly *our own*, as any Act of inferior Virtue, to which we are led by the Reasonings of our pious Friends ? The *divine* Power operates here in the same *Manner* in general, as the *human* ; and the one as agreeably to our rational and moral Natures as the other. The Determinations of the Will, in both Cases, follow the Light of the Understanding : We act with as much real moral Freedom, in following the Illuminations and Persuasions of the HOLY SPIRIT, as we do in receiving

ceiving the Instructions, and following the Advice of our Friends. The Powers, indeed; that so enlighten and perswade, are infinitely different, and so are the Effects produced by them; but their general Nature and Mode of Operation, are so far the same as to be equally consonant to the just and rational Liberty of the Will: There is no more unnatural Violence done to it in the former Case, than in the latter—as it is written—*thy People shall be WILLING in the Day of thy Power*; i. e. be made so, by just Views of themselves, and of their Redeemer, under a divine Influence. And, indeed, it is not properly the *Will itself*, but its *Corruptions*, that the Grace of God opposes, and subdues. *

But

* Some suppose this moral Change, effected by the Will of Man, co-operating with the divine Word, and other external Means: But the Bible says, expressly, *not by the Will of Man but of GOD*,—That *we are born of GOD, of the Spirit*, &c. Our Wills and all other Powers are but the mere Instruments operating under the efficient Cause, the Power of GOD.

But perhaps it will still be objected,
 “ That the very Idea of a divine Power
 “ immediately operating upon the human
 “ Mind, is absurd and fanatical, and
 “ therefore absolutely irrational.” But
 why so? If we can have Access to one
 another’s Hearts, and Influence them at
 the Distance of Thousands of Miles, by
 writing; why should it be thought ab-
 surd to suppose, that the Almighty and
 Omnipotent God, should have access to
 them in a Way peculiar to himself, tho’
 we should not be able to comprehend
 all the *Manner* of it? There are many
 Effects produced daily within our Obser-
 vation, of the *Manner* of the Operation
 of whose Causes we are entirely ignorant.
 It is extremely irrational to deny the Ex-
 istence of a Cause, merely because we
 cannot understand the Mode of its
 Operation.

The sacred Writings, however, assert
 the Doctrine I am pleading for, in the
 clearest and strongest Terms. They de-
 clare, that *the Spirit of God strives with*
Men—that God *worketh in us, both to will*
and

*and to do;** that the Spirit of Life in CHRIST JESUS, enlightens, quickens, and frees us from the Law of Sin and Death; that he dwells in his People, and helps their Infirmities, &c. all which Passages evidently refer, not to the extraordinary Inspiration and miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, peculiar to the prophetic and apostolic Ages; but to his ordinary Power and

* Gen. iii. 6. Phil. ii. 12. This latter Text alone is sufficient to prove the Doctrine of a supernatural Influence, sometimes immediately exercised upon the Hearts of Men—The Words are remarkably expressive (Ο θεος γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ὑμῖν) *for GOD worketh EFFECTUALLY (or with prevailing Energy) in you, both to will and to do, &c.* He influences the Will, in a Manner agreeable to its Nature, i. e. by Illumination and Conviction of the Truth, and so leads it to chuse what is right; and also enables the other active Powers of the Mind, to carry its Volitions into Effect, by removing Obstructions, or helping them to overcome them. The Manner *how*, is not within the Reach of our Comprehension entirely, nor is it necessary it should be. It is sufficient to know, that it is possible and rational, every Way consistent with the *moral Nature of Man*, and the *moral Government of God*.

and Agency, in the Hearts of all true Christians in general—for the Apostle assures us, that if we *have not the Spirit of CHRIST we are none of his.* *

To say there is no supernatural Influence ever exercised upon the Mind of Man, is to set aside the important Duty of *Prayer* as entirely useless. For, in this Case, the Christian might say—
 “ I have the Bible in my Hand, and
 “ Grace in my Heart; I need no more
 “ —I have nothing to ask of God, nor
 “ God any Thing to grant me; I can
 “ now save myself without his farther
 “ Assistance.” But where is the Christian that would dare to say this? The Scriptures, however, teach him another Language, they say—*pray without ceasing; ask and it shall be given you*—for God giveth even *his holy Spirit to them that ask it.* The Psalmist † had the divine Law in
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* Rom. viii. 2, 9, 13, 14, 16, 26, 27. 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. John xvi. 8, 13.

† Psal. cxix. 18. Act. xvi. 14. 1 Cor. iii. 6. 2 Pet. i. 21. Ezek. xiii. 2.

his Hand, and yet prays, that God *would open his Eyes* to see its Wonders. And thus *the LORD's opening Lydia's Heart*, is distinguished from the *Apostle's preaching*, and *her Attention* to it.—The Means are one Thing, the Power that renders them effectual another. *Paul may plant*, and Apollo water, but GOD *giveth the Encrease*.

And as the Bible speaks of this Influence in Words so clear and expressive, it must be wrong to attempt to criticise away their plain obvious Meaning, in Order to guard against the fanciful Impulses of senseless Enthusiasm; as none of them, simply understood, give the least Countenance to such Absurdities. They are Words of Soberness and Truth, and every Way consonant to enlightened Reason.

The Energy of the DEITY pervades all Nature. It is his omnipotent Hand, that rolls the planetary Worlds, through the vast Regions of æthereal Space.—It is his vital Power that operates through every Part of the Animal and vegetable
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Kingdoms; why then should the more peculiar Influence of his Spirit be denied in the *moral World*, where the Effects of his Operations are infinitely more important, both to his own Glory, and the Happiness of his Creatures, while those Operations appear consistent with the Nature of moral Agents and the Constitution they are under. *

But

* Some will tell us, that these Operations of the divine Power, may all arise from one general Impulse or vital Energy, imparted at first to the whole System of moral Causes and Effects, and ever afterwards acting by fixed Rules, called *the Laws of Nature*, without any new intermediate Interposition of the first Cause. Thus all the good Effects produced in the moral World, by the divine Word, and other Mediums of Influence, are to be ascribed to that first vital Energy, operating according to these Laws, and not to any new Communication of Power. But this seems too Metaphysical, and out of the Reach of common Capacities; while the Idea of an immediate occasional Influence, is full as rational, more easily comprehended by the Bulk of Mankind; more consonant to the plain, simple, common-sense Language of the Scriptures, and to the Nature of Prayer, as there taught. But which ever Hypothesis we take, still the Effect produced in us must be ascribed to the divine Energy.

But we shall find the Infidel ready to object against the Christian Religion, “the “ Strictness of its Morals.” And we must allow that it opposes in the strongest Manner, the vicious Propensities of our Nature, and forbids our Indulgence of them under the severest Penalties; and at the same Time enlarges the Sphere of our Duty, and multiplies our Obligations to Virtue. But we should always remember, that the Dictates of corrupted *Passions* are not the Dictates of sound *Reason*, nor can the criminal Gratification of the former be justified by the latter, or be ever made to sit easy upon our Consciences in the Hour of serious Reflection, however in the Flush of sensual Delight, or the Moments of vicious Intoxication, we may flatter ourselves with that Idea. No; wicked Men themselves, ’till desperately hardened, feel a Sentence of Condemnation within, especially when they go out of the common Road of Sinning; and that pronounced with the greater Energy, and deeper Conviction of the divine Authority, from their Acquaintance

quaintance with the present Christian Dispensation; because this Dispensation throws a much clearer and stronger Light upon the Reasons, and Motives of their Obedience.

With the Laws and Rules of more refined and exalted Virtue, given us in the Gospel, and with their own Consciences, as influenced by them, Men may *quarrel*, therefore, as long as they please, they can never make them *unreasonable*, lessen their real Authority, or evade their Power. And it should be remembered, that while the Gospel enlarges the Circle of our Duty and multiplies our Difficulties in the Discharge of it, it also enlarges our View of the Glory and Happiness of the Reward; and promises proportionable Assistance to our Endeavours; these Duties therefore must be reasonable, and the Consequences of neglecting them, the just Matter of our Dread, while any Thing rational exists in our Minds, which will be for ever.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XI.

Farther Objections against Christianity considered.

DEAR SIR,

FROM the *Meanness* of our SAVIOUR'S Appearance when he dwelt in our World, the *Ignominy* of his Death, the *Spirituality* of his Kingdom, the *Distance* of its promised Enjoyments, and the Contrariety of the whole to the passionate Love of this World, which influences the Generality of Mankind; we shall find another set of Objections against his Religion often urged by its Enemies.

But a little sober Reflection will serve to satisfy a rational Mind, in Theory at least, that Man is not made for this World only, and that his supreme and satisfying

satisfying Delights must have a superior Source, and reach beyond the scanty Limits of Time. He feels in himself many Reasons to believe, that he lives here in a State of Probation, and must by and by exist in another more spiritual and eternal State, infinitely more happy or miserable. Whether he derives this Belief from the Light of Nature, or from Revelation, the Effect is the same: And the natural Inference is, that it must be both his Duty and his Interest to restrain his lower Appetites, pursue every temporal Enjoyment with Moderation, and seek the Favour of God as his highest Felicity.

Reason will tell us that the Kingdom of God amongst Men must bear a Resemblance of his own pure and exalted Mind, and be of a spiritual and moral Nature;—That is, moral Worth must be its Riches and Honours, and moral Pleasures its supreme Enjoyment:—That to establish such a Kingdom must be the ruling Design of the divine Wisdom in all the Revelations it makes, whether natural

tural or supernatural, and in all its providential Dispensations to Man:—That CHRIST did not come into our World to rival and dethrone *Cæsar*, destroy the Roman Power and Police of Civil Government, and make his ancient People the Jews, or the believing Gentiles, the Lords of the Nations, and enrich them with their Spoils: No; he came to execute Purposes of infinitely greater Importance—*To destroy the Works of the Devil—finish Transgression, and make an End of Sin—bring in an everlasting Righteousness*; and, in a Word, to deliver sinful Men from their Guilt, Pollution and Misery, and *redeem them to God, by his Blood.*

Accordingly this great Deliverer teaches us, both by his Doctrine and Example, to look upon *this* World, as a transitory Scene, that must soon be changed for another infinitely grand and awfully interesting, and that our chief Business here is to fear God, and keep his Commandments, and, through an humble penitent Faith in CHRIST, *seek a better Country even an heavenly.*

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In this View of Things the Meanness of the Redeemer's external Appearance, and the Ignominy of his Death throw but so much the brighter Lustre upon his Character, and set the Glory of his Benevolence in a Light so much the more striking and aimable. We see him, indeed, as one stricken of God, overlooked and despised by the Great and the Mighty of this World, and treated as one of the basest of Men;—but it was that he might unfold the eternal Counsels of God, to the View of his intelligent Creatures, pour a just Contempt upon the false Glory of this World, and direct our Attention to something infinitely more worthy of our Regard;—do the highest Honour to the Majesty of the divine Governments, display the Riches of its Grace, and restore Myriads of otherwise ruined Men to perfect Holiness and eternal Life! All this, surely, is sufficient to wipe away the Reproach of the Cross, in the Judgment of every rational Mind. And we have, indeed, many shining Witnesses, not only in the Records of the New Testament, but even

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at this Day, of the moralizing Power of the Doctrine and Grace of our once crucified Redeemer:—Millions who, before they were experimentally acquainted with his Gospel, were the miserable Slaves of Sin, *serving divers Lusts*, are now, freed from the wretched Bondage, exult in *the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*; happy in themselves, an Honour to their Profession, and a Blessing to the World. In short, it is an undeniable Fact, that that moral Excellency of Character, which even Heathens themselves have admired, and their Philosophers pretended to aim at, but could never attain, is carried to the highest Degree of Perfection it can be in this World, amongst some who were before the most ignorant; vicious, and abandoned of Mankind, merely by the Power of the Gospel of CHRIST. And all this astonishing moralizing Efficacy of this Gospel, and its wide Extent among all Ranks and Conditions of People, is derived from the humiliating Sufferings and Death of the SON OF GOD, and its
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Suitability to the Conditions and moral Feelings of their Minds ; this made the Apostle *glory in the Cross of Christ*, and say, that CHRIST *crucified was the Wisdom and Power of God to Salvation*. For this very Reason the Christian Doctrine is received by Multitudes who are incapable of entering into any learned Arguments about its Divinity—they feel themselves miserable Sinners, and perceive there such a Remedy as they want, and receiving it by a lively *Faith*, they find a *Witness in themselves* of its divine Original. This is a kind of Evidence that suits every Case and every Capacity. Here they find far more powerful Motives for believing than all the fine Reasonings of the most learned Theologist can produce ; for, after all, it is not a mere Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel that makes *real* Christians, but receiving it under a lively penetrating Sense of our moral Depravity, Guilt, and Danger, as the best adapted and only effectual Means of our Deliverance.

In this View, *Christianity may be said to*
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be founded in Argument; or rather as we should say *Reason*. For though it is not the Invention of human Reason, or Result of philosophical Disquisition, nor rendered effectual to Salvation by any of these Powers; yet it results from the Wisdom and Goodness of God; is adapted to the real Condition of human Nature; and, therefore, carries in the very Face of it the highest Reason in the World for our cordial Reception of it; to say nothing of the many other rational Evidences by which its Truth and Divinity is supported, which we have in Abundance; and such as will stand the Test of fair and impartial Examination from the minutest Philosopher, whose Pride will suffer him to hearken to his Common Sense and moral Feelings.

And here in this moralizing Efficacy of the Gospel, and its Authority over the Consciences of Men, we see much of its Superiority to all other religious Systems that ever appeared in the World:—*Mahomet* took Care to suit *his* to the depraved Appetites of Mankind in the general

neral, and to the Sensuality, Cruelty, and Superstition of his Countrymen in particular. The *Philosophers* before him took the same Method, and where they did not flatter the grosser and more vicious Taste of their Hearers, they flattered their Pride and Vanity and intemperate Love of false Glory, and owed all the little Success they had to this Kind of Suitability. CHRISTIANITY sets itself in declared Opposition to all these, and every other vicious Propensity of our fallen Nature, and yet, through divine Power that attends it, subdues and reigns victorious over them in innumerable Instances.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XII.

Of Faith.

FROM the preceding View of Christianity, you will perceive, my dear Friend, the Necessity and Importance of FAITH. By *Faith*, in this Case, I mean, an *assured Perswasion, arising from Conviction of the Truth and Excellency of the revealed Will of God; an entire Approbation of it, and Reliance upon it, with a sincere Endeavour after a full Conformity to its Nature and Design; or, in four Words, Belief; Approbation, or Choice; Trust, and Obedience.* These Ideas are generally included in the Word *Faith*, as connected with eternal Life in the sacred Scripture; even when it mentions only one of them more particularly, the other are implied as inseparable Ingredients in it.

Simple

Simple *Belief* of the Truth, is Faith in the *Understanding*; *Approbation*, or *Choice*, is Faith in the *Will* and *Affections*; *Trust* and *Obedience*, is Faith in the executive Powers of the Mind. *Belief* is the Consequence of *Conviction*, or the *Evidence* of the Reality of *Things not seen*; * i. e. the Effect of a clear, realizing View of *revealed* Truths, such as were not discoverable by human Reason, or the mere Light of Nature. And I call it the Effect of *Conviction*, because it is impossible we should believe without Conviction, nor does God himself require we should; though he will not excuse as blameless, the wilful Neglect of the *Means* of Conviction, which his Goodness affords us; and which, in respect of that evangelical Revelation we enjoy, is clear and abundant; and to which it is our indispensable Duty, as rational Creatures under the moral Government of God, to attend with serious Reverence and desire to know and embrace the Truth; and, if we

* Heb. xi. 1.

do so, the Truth will appear; and if it does appear, we must (not only simply or merely *believe* it, for that is unavoidable, and therefore not properly Matter of Duty, but must) *yield* our Assent to it, approve and embrace it, and conform to its Dictates; wilfully to act otherwise would be our Sin.

The Evidence of divine Truth may be more or less strong, clear, penetrating, but the least Degree of it is sufficient to leave every wilful Rejector of it without Excuse: In the Highest it will produce that Belief which is connected with Salvation by the Constitution of the Gospel, and is, indeed, *the Faith of the Operation of God*, * which will be accompanied with a cordial Approbation of and firm Reliance upon, the Truths believed; and produce a conscientious Endeavour after a practical Conformity of Temper and Conduct to the Whole.

This *Faith* is perfectly consistent with *Reason*, and is, in Fact, only a particular

* Col. ii. 12.

Mode of exercising it, under a divine Influence; and therefore no more disposed to embrace Impossibilities, or Absurdities, than Reason itself; nor does it forbid us the Use of our Reason in Religion, only guards us against abusing it, by exalting it above its Author, or suffering it to pretend, with its scanty Line, to fathom the Depths of infinite Wisdom.

Faith may be considered either as a *Grace* or as a *Duty*. What we *receive*, such as Light, Means of Conviction, Motives to Persuasion, &c. is Matter of *Grace*, or the Favour of God through CHRIST: All that is *required* of us, or *to be done by us*, in Consequence of this Grace; such as attending to Evidence, serious Consideration, yielding to Conviction, approving, chusing; trusting, conforming to the Design of what we believe, is Matter of *Duty*.

The Necessity and Reasonableness of such a Regard to the Gospel Revelation, is, in a Manner, Self-evident;—For if it please God to declare his Will to us, it must be our Duty to believe it, that is,

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*receive and treat it accordingly; upon proper Evidence of the Fact; nor is it possible that we should receive any real Benefit from this gracious Revelation God has given us, without we believe it, the Blessings proposed in it being promised only to such. And, indeed, Faith is the very first Step and leading Principle in all true Religion. Accordingly the Apostle tells us, what Reason itself approves, That without Faith it is impossible to please God; he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

The *first* and *immediate* Object of Faith is the divine Word; the *ultimate* Object of it is the great and blessed God and Father of all; but the *intermediate* Object, which more particularly calls for the Christian's Attention, and which comprises both the other as the grand Medium or Centre where they meet, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST; the only *Mediator* between God and Man.—In him, there-

* Heb. xi. 1—6.

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fore it is said, *all the Fulness of the God-head dwells*—He is the *Brightness of the Father's Glory*.—The Treasures of divine Wisdom, the Authority of the Law, the Grace of the Gospel, are all laid up in him, and in him the *Promises of eternal Life are all yea and amen*:—In him we see God *reconciling the World to himself*; from his *Fulness we receive Grace upon Grace*: He is the Way, the Truth and the Life; and no Man cometh unto the Father but by him. In a Word, the Book of GOD is full of him; it is written on Purpose to display the Lustre of his Character, and call our Regards to him, as the SON OF GOD AND THE SAVIOUR OF MEN.

And as *Faith* lies at the Foundation of all true Religion, so it has the main Stroke in forming the Christian Character and Hope. It is by *Faith* we enter into the New Covenant and Kingdom of GOD, are united to CHRIST, receive new Powers of Spiritual Life from him, *become the Children of GOD*, and the Heirs of Glory.—By *Faith* our Hearts are purified, Temptations repelled, the World

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overcome, the Word rendered effectual, Communion with God maintained, and the Joys of Heaven anticipated here upon Earth: In a Word, by *Faith we are justified*, and *have Peace with God*; live by it, die in it, and at last *receive the End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls*. But that we may not deceive ourselves, we should remember, that *this Faith* is not a mere simple, speculative, uninfluencing Belief of the Truth of the Gospel; but a vital, operative Principle, *that works by Love*, in Obedience to it. A Faith, by which CHRIST *dwells in our Hearts* in the Power of his redeeming Grace, reconciling us to GOD, transforming us into his own moral Likeness, inspiring us with supreme Love to GOD, delight in his Ways; and with a sincere and ardent Benevolence to all Mankind, fixing our Expectations of complete Happiness in the World to come. This is the Faith the Scriptures describe, and enlightened Reason approves, as connected with eternal Life, and this only. With a mere speculative
Faith

Faith without Works *the Devils*, and
Thousands of wicked Men, *believe and*
tremble.

And now to conclude the Whole of
what has been said.—Suppose some vi-
cious Libertine should read these Hints,
and consider a Moment; what could he
possibly urge, even to his own Heart,
in Vindication of his Principles and Con-
duct, whilst, against the Pleadings of
that Heart, he gives up all rational
Hope of that Eternity of Bliss promised
in the Gospel, for the paltry Gratifi-
cation of his depraved Passions in the
Enjoyment of Pleasures, in their own
Nature base, false, momentary, ruinous?
If the BIBLE should prove true, as it cer-
tainly will; or, which is much the same
Thing, if Reason and Conscience, or the
moral Feelings of the Mind, be indeed
REALITIES, as they must be if there be
any Thing *real* in Nature, he is most
certainly treasuring up to himself Tri-
bulation and Anguish past all Concep-
tion great.

A constant round of Business or Plea-
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sure may drown Reflection, and false Reasoning may cherish a delusive Hope for the present, but not always ;—the Time will come when these Things will lose all their Power of Consolation ; and the moral Principle, though now lulled asleep will be awakened, and act with a most alarming and irresistible Vigour ;—when RELIGION, which may now appear to his wanton and unfeeling Mind, a Subject of Contempt and Ridicule, will rise up before him in all her awful Dignity and Importance, and fill him with the most distressful Apprehensions.—Reason and moral Sense are vital immortal Principles, the Inspiration of the ALMIGHTY ; they may be injured, wounded, pained, but cannot, by any created Being whatever, be destroyed. Even *Death* itself, as it now stands, under the new Dispensation, can only alter their Manner of Existence, and Operation :—The natural Food and Delight of these Powers is RELIGION and VIRTUE, and, what is ever inseparable from them, THE FAVOUR OF GOD : In the Possession of this Good
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only we can be happy; every Thing, therefore, which we do in Contradiction to the sacred Authority of these Powers, is, so far as it goes, an Inlet into Misery: We are, indeed, from the disordered Frame of our Nature, the evil Influences of the World, and the Prince of Darkness, too prone to this Contradiction; but while the *Bible* points us out a Remedy for those Evils, the Way to obtain Pardon for the past, and Help for the future; and while Reason and the moral Sense coincide with this divine Book, plead the same Cause of Piety and Righteousness, and urge the same Motives to Obedience;—while this is the Case, if, in Contempt of these gracious Advantages, we yield to Temptation, and indulge the sinful Propensities of our Nature, we must be left without Excuse, and shut out from every Source of Consolation, however many and great the Miseries we suffer in Consequence.—The Quibbles of Philosophy, the Intoxication of Vice, the Stupidity of a seared Conscience, will not avail in the least towards

wards avoiding, or alleviating the Punishment which the Hand of the Almighty will inflict upon the Workers of Iniquity, in that great and awful Day when he shall judge the World in Righteousness.

Religion and Virtue as they stand in the *Christian Revelation*, come recommended to our Regards with such Evidence of their divine Excellency and Worth, from every Quarter to which the Eye of Reason can be directed, that I can see no Alternative, but that we must be either *Atheists* or *Christians*; Christians indeed and in Truth, if we would be what, even Reason itself tells us we ought to be. Nothing but Pride, the wilful Perversion of Reason, the Indulgence of vicious Appetite, the Neglect of fair Trial, or the not distinguishing between Religion as it lies in the *Bible*, and as it is perverted by false Learning and Inventions of Men; nothing but the one or the other, or all these, can induce Beings endued with such Powers and Feelings, as Mankind are, to reject, or practically disregard, a System of *Religion* so adapted

dapted to their Nature and Condition, and so conducive to their Happiness, as that of CHRIST appears to be:—A RELIGION, that gives us the most grand and delightful Ideas of GOD; breathes, in every Part of it, the Spirit of divine Wisdom and Love; points us out an infallible Remedy for all our moral Disorders; affords us the most effectual Support and Consolation in every Distress, and opens to the dying Eyes, of every obedient Believer of it, a World of everlasting Felicity.—Weak, foolish, and worse than mad must the Wretch be, who can imagine such a System of Religion a cunningly devised Fable, and treat it with Contempt, or even cold Indifference. From an Infatuation so awful, may the good LORD deliver us!

Finally, my dear Friend, while a Subject of such Dignity and Importance as the *Religion of CHRIST* is before us, let us be serious, humble, thankful; beware lest we deface its native Beauty, by the extravagant Whims of Enthusiasm and Superstition on the one Hand, or by af-

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fectèd Criticism, philosophical Reveries,
or cold Speculation on the other :—

“ — Medio tutissimus ibis.”

Let us receive and treat it as it is,—a *Religion* designed to enlighten the Understanding, warm and purify the Heart ; and, by uniting these happy Effects, lead us to the constant Practice of rational Devotion and universal Benevolence. Let us cultivate a lively Zeal for its essential Doctrines, but without a bigotted Attachment to Party Nostrums ; a conscientious Conformity to the Convictions of our own Minds, without uncharitably censuring those who think differently. In a Word, let us shew the World that we not only believe the *Truth*, but possess the *Spirit* of the Gospel, and are indeed *Followers of them who through Faith and Patience inherit its Promises*.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

A P P E N D I X.

The following Lines were accidentally omitted at the End of the Note p. 12; and are therefore added here: —

Since the above Note was written, I have found this curious Book noticed in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, for Sept. 1686, Art. IV. The French Title says—"Traduit en Anglois sur la Version Latine d'Edouard Pocock; maître aux Arts dans le College de l'Eglise de Christ à Oxford." The Authors of the *Bibliothèque*, &c. (who were the Reviewers in those Days) say, that from Mr. Pocock's Latin Version—"on en fit aussi-tôt une Traduction Flamande, qui fut imprimée à Amsterdam, chez Jan Ricu-werts, in 4to, in 1672." And that—"Un Rabbin la mit en Hebreu." They also give a pretty large Extract from the Book.

E R R A T A.

Page.	Line.
5	2 for <i>Epecuri</i> , read <i>Epicuri</i> .
19 Note	7 for <i>accute</i> , read <i>acute</i> .
30	5 from bottom, for <i>Truth</i> , read <i>Faith</i> .
33	4 for <i>Lucippus</i> , read <i>Leucippus</i> .
49	3 for <i>Despote</i> , read <i>Despot</i> . for <i>irresistable</i> read <i>irresistible</i> .
51	7 from bottom, for <i>impatient</i> read <i>important</i> .
60	14 for <i>of Property</i> , read <i>or Property</i> .
77	last for <i>of which</i> , read <i>to which</i> .
204	5 from bottom, for <i>laying</i> , read <i>lay</i> .
207	8 from bottom, for <i>given it</i> , read <i>given of it</i> .
231	8 from bottom, for <i>of his</i> , read <i>to his</i> .
233	9 from bottom, for <i>Governments</i> read <i>Government</i> .
236	14 for <i>is supported</i> , read <i>are supported</i> .
237	3 from bottom, for <i>thro' divine</i> , read <i>thro' the divine</i> .



